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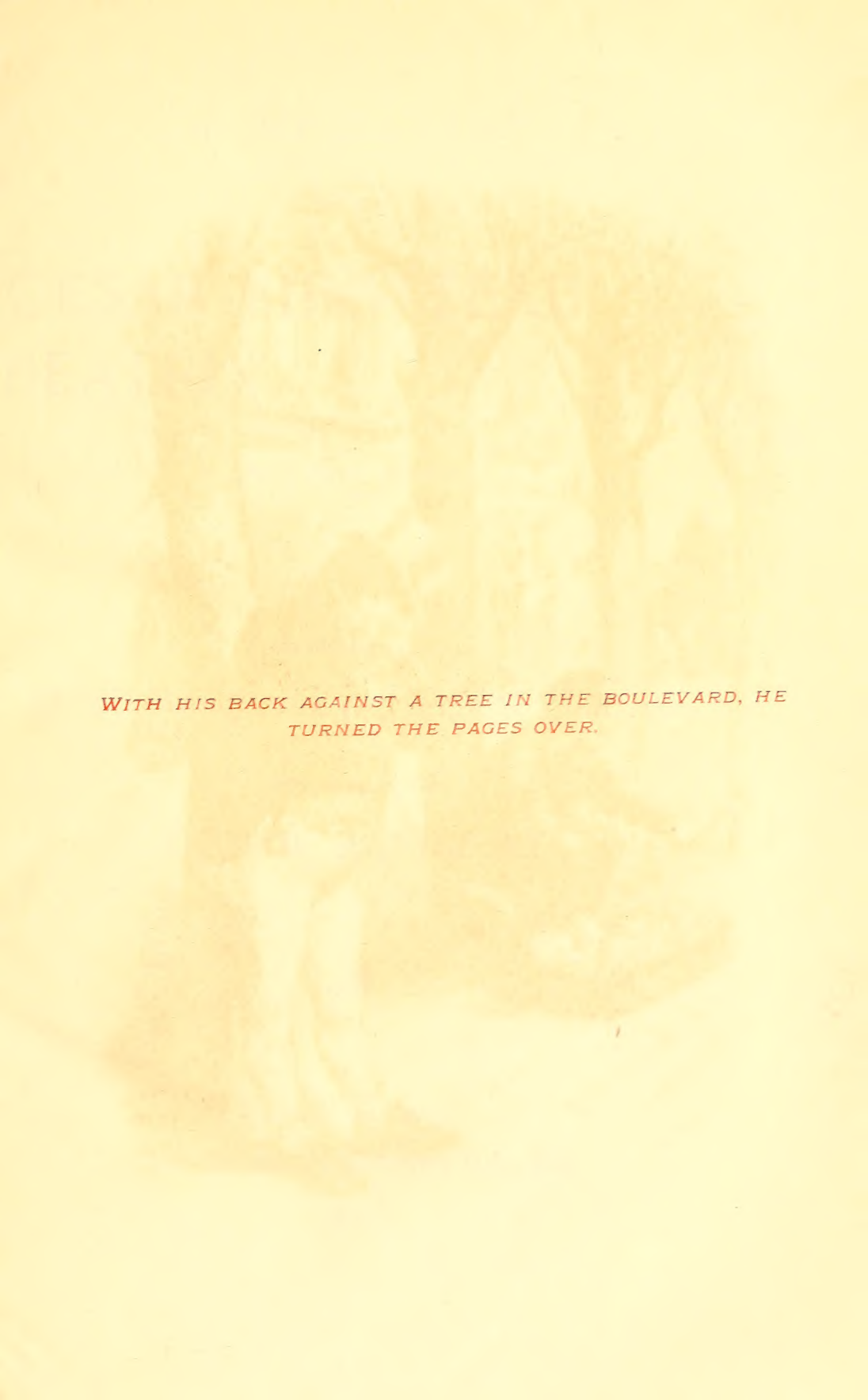
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CÉSAR BIROTTEAU
GAUDISSART THE GREAT


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WITH HIS BACK AGAINST A TREE IN THE BOULEVARD, HE TURNED THE PAGES OVER.

Dup
1071

H. DE BALZAC

CESAR BIROTTEAU
BÉATRIX

AND OTHER STORIES

PQ2163
.93
E5
1899
c.2

TRANSLATED BY

ELLEN MARRIAGE and JAMES WARING

WITH PREFACES BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



PHILADELPHIA
THE GEBBIE PUBLISHING CO., Ltd.
1899

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Sam

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PREFACE.

Few books of Balzac's have been the subject of more diverse judgment than "César Birotteau." From the opinion of the unnamed solicitor, who told Madame Serville that it was an invaluable work to consult on bankruptcy, to that of M. Paul Lacroix (beloved of many as the Bibliophile Jacob), that it might be forgiven for the sake of "Le Père Goriot" and the "Peau de Chagrin," there is not perhaps quite so great a distance as may appear; but other expressions, opposed not merely in form, but in fact, might probably be collected.

As for the unfavorable division of these opinions there is no difficulty in discovering their causes; and there should be little, save in the case of blind partisans, in acknowledging their partial validity. Although the book opens with one of Balzac's most brilliant pieces of actual human observation—the description of the vague and half-delirious terror of waking from a bad dream—and though the subsequent conversation between César and Constance has the merit of no vulgar curtain-lecture, it soon goes off into one of those endless retrospective narrations which are among the greatest blots on the Comédie, which utterly stop the action, and which, in the case of very many readers who are not gifted with the faculty of what may be called literary mountaineering, are very likely to cause the putting down of the book. To this initial difficulty has to be added the choking of the latter part with those bankruptcy details which did so charm the professional mind of Laure Balzac's learned friend, and which, for unprofessional minds, have something which is very much the reverse of charm. The reader of only moderate athletic powers, who has with difficulty struggled through and up the sloughs and slopes of the previous history of the Birotteau business, is hardly to be blamed if he gives up the attempt in despair

after some attempt on the slippery "screes" of commercial law which Balzac has delighted to strew over the higher ground.

Complaints of these drawbacks, I repeat, would be, and are, just. Nevertheless, though the list of the faults of the book is not even yet exhausted, it will be a very great pity if any one is baffled by them and fails to go through to the end. For "César Birotteau" is a book than which none of Balzac's is more thoroughly *vécu*, as his countrymen say, more thoroughly inspired with the personal sympathies and experiences of the author; and this with Balzac was always a guarantee of success. He too knew bankruptcy well, and not merely by his studies in the lawyer's office; for though I believe he never actually "passed the court" (even his printing and publishing operations, disastrous as they were, terminated in arrangements), he was face to face with it all his life. He, too, knew the attraction, the fatal attraction of *une bonne affaire*, such as he speaks of in one of his letters—*une bonne affaire qui ne demande que cent mille francs*. He was perfectly capable of buying up all the nuts in Paris in order to make hair-oil of them; I should not be at all surprised if he had actually had in view this very speculation. And he thought he knew the ways of bankers and folk of that kind; though whether he did or not, the sons of Zeruiah were usually as much too hard for him as they were for Birotteau. Hence there is even in the dryest details, even in the most long-winded *reportage* of the book, the throb of personal interest, the pulse and pant of life.

The action and characters also are interesting, if not, on the whole, quite artistically probable. It will be observed that the hero does a little underlie the constant objection of the Devil's Advocate to Balzac, that almost every one of his good characters is more or less of a fool. Even a keen man of business *may*, of course, be easily outwitted in a game of pure speculation—a proposition which we need not go to

France, or examine the long list of "crashes" from the fictitious *terrains de la Madeleine* to the real Panama, in order to establish. And a very keen man of business may be imprudently expensive in a combined fit of personal vanity and affection for his family. But it is a little of a stretch on the credulity of the reader to represent a plodding tradesman like Birotteau, who, as we are expressly told, had an old-fashioned horror of "paper," as not merely incurring large speculative obligations, but as stripping himself of every rap of ready money while exposing himself to an unusual demand for it. The picture of his going a-borrowing and a-sorrowing is drawn with great power and with much vivacity; but here, too, his simplicity is a thought exaggerated. And Constance's affection for and fidelity to an unattractive man, whom she saw to be little better than a fool, may be thought improbable in an ideal beauty with a clear head, while some may even say that ideal beauties are almost always extremely stupid. Yet, again, in Césarine, Momus may point to that superficiality and vagueness which usually, if not always, mar Balzac's treatment of an "honest" girl.

Yet these things will not, any more than those formerly mentioned, make any fair or genial judge give up the book to a lower class than that of Balzac's best, if not of his very best. Whatever faults Birotteau may have, his goodness and his probity and, let us add (though it be a little illegitimate), his tragic end, make him one of the author's most sympathetic personages, as are also his wife and daughter. If Popinot is rather the virtuous apprentice of the stage, and Du Tillet the wicked ditto, who is *not* punished, the former at least is attractive; and Pillerault, the good uncle, certainly cannot be accused of foolishness. All the minor figures come in well for the action whenever Balzac will let them act, and not be talking himself; and even the bankruptcy affair acquires a sort of interest from the rapidity and bustle of its conduct. As for the ball—that famous and elaborate instance of the penalties

and disappointments of elaborately engineered and anticipated pleasure—it is excellent. Nor should we close without special commendation for Claparon, a less labored personage than some of the author's, but a very happy sketch of rascality which is not exactly scoundrelism, because, though entirely unscrupulous, it is not in the least malign.

The book was originally published after a fashion not uncommon in France, but, I think, hardly, if at all, known in England, with no publisher's name, and not for sale, but as a bonus jointly given by the "Figaro" and the "Estafette" to their subscribers for 1838. It bore that date, but was actually issued in November, 1837. In this form it had two volumes, three parts (the present two, and a third, "Le Triomphe de César"), and sixteen chapters and headings. Republished by Charpentier in 1839, it lost the chapter, but kept the part-headings, the last being omitted when it became a "Scène de la Vie Parisienne" in the general arrangement of the Comédie (1844).

"Gaudissart the Great" is, of course, slight, not merely in bulk, but in conception. Balzac's Tourangeau patriotism may have amused itself by the idea of the villagers "rolling" the great Gaudissart; but the ending of the tale can hardly be thought to be quite so good as the beginning. Still, that beginning is altogether excellent. The sketch of the *commis-voyageur* generally smacks of that *physiologic* style of which Balzac was so fond; but it is good, and Gaudissart himself, as well as the whole scene with his *épouse libre*, is delightful. The Illustrious One was evidently a favorite character with his creator. He nowhere plays a very great part; but it is everywhere a rather favorable and, except in this little mishap with Margaritis (which, it must be observed, does not turn entirely to his discomfiture), a rather successful part. We have him in "César Birotteau," superintending the early efforts of Popinot to launch the Huile Céphalique. He was present at the great ball. He served as intermediary to M.

de Bauvan in the merciful scheme of buying at fancy prices the handiwork of the Count's faithless spouse, and so providing her with a livelihood; and later, as a theatrical manager, a little spoilt by his profession, we find him in "Le Cousin Pons." But he is always what the French call "a good devil," and here he is a very good devil, indeed.

G. S.

Note.—I hope it is not improper to bespeak unusual indulgence for the translator in regard to the technicalities of this book. She has, I know, taken the greatest pains with them. But to secure absolute success in such a matter we must have an expert in French bankruptcy law who is also an expert in English bankruptcy law, and perfect in both literatures as well. One might go far before finding such a person.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU,

Retail Perfumer,
Deputy-Mayor of the Second Arrondissement, Paris,
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, etc.

To Monsieur Alphonse de Lamartine, from his admirer,
DE BALZAC.

I.

CÉSAR'S APOGEE.

THERE is but one brief interval of silence during a winter night in the Rue Saint-Honoré; for to the sounds of carriages rolling home from balls and theatres succeeds the rumbling of market-gardeners' carts on their way to the Great Market. During this pause in the great symphony of uproar sent up by the streets of Paris, this cessation of traffic toward one o'clock in the morning, the wife of M. César Birotteau, of the retail perfumery establishment near the Place Vendôme, dreamed a frightful dream, and awoke with a start.

She had met her double. She had appeared to herself, clad in rags, laying a meagre, shriveled hand on her own store-door handle. She had been at once in her chair at the cash desk and on the threshold; she had heard herself begging; she had heard two selves speaking in fact, the one from the desk, the other from the doorstep. She turned and stretched out her hand for her husband, and found his place cold. At that her terror grew to such a pitch that she could not move her head, her neck seemed stiffened to stone, the walls

of her throat were glued together, her voice failed her; she sat up rigid and motionless, staring before her with wide eyes. Her hair rose with a painful sensation, strange sounds rang in her ears, something clutched at her heart though it beat hard, she was covered with perspiration, and yet shuddering with cold in the alcove behind the two open folding-doors.

Fear, with its partially morbific effects, is an emotion which puts so violent a strain upon the human mechanism that the mental faculties are either suddenly stimulated by it to the highest degree of activity or reduced to the last extremity of disorganization. Physiology has long been puzzled to account for a phenomenon which upsets its theories and stultifies its hypotheses, although it is simply and solely a shock brought about spontaneously, but, like all electrical phenomena, erratic and unaccountable in its manifestations. This explanation will become a commonplace when men of science recognize the great part played by electricity in human thinking power.

Mme. Birotteau was just then enduring the pangs which bring about a certain mental lucidity consequent on those terrible discharges when the will is contracted or expanded by a mysterious mechanism. So that, during a lapse of time, exceedingly short if measured by the tickings of a clock, but incommensurable by reason of the infinite rapid impressions which it brought, the poor woman had the prodigious power of uttering more thoughts and of calling up more memories than would have arisen in her mind in its normal state in the course of a whole day. Her soliloquy during this vivid and painful experience may be resumed in a few words she uttered, incongruous and nonsensical as they were—

"There is no reason whatever why Birotteau should be out of bed. He ate so much veal; perhaps it disagreed with him. But if he had been taken ill, he would have waked me up. These nineteen years that we have slept here together under this roof, he has never got up in the middle of the

night without telling me, poor dear! He has never slept out except when he was on guard. Did he go to bed when I did? Why, yes. Dear me! how stupid I am!"

She glanced over the bed. There lay her husband's night-cap, moulded to the almost conical shape of his head.

"Can he be dead? Can he have made away with himself? Why should he?" she thought. "Since they made him deputy-mayor two years ago, I haven't known what to make of him. To get mixed up with public affairs, on the word of an woman, isn't it enough to make you feel sorry for a man? The business is doing well. He has just given me a shawl. Perhaps it is doing badly! Pshaw! I should know of it if it were. But is there any knowing what is in the bottom of a man's mind? Or a woman's either? There is no harm in that. Haven't sales amounted to five thousand francs this very day! And then a deputy-mayor is not likely to kill himself; he knows the law too well for that. But where can he be?"

She had no power to turn her head; she could not stretch out a hand to the bell-rope, which would have set in motion a general servant, three clerks, and the errand boy. The nightmare that lasted on into her waking moments was so strong upon her that she forgot her daughter, peacefully sleeping in the next room, beyond the door which opened at the foot of the bed.

"Birotteau?" She received no answer. She fancied that she had called aloud, but, as a matter of fact, she had only spoken in her thoughts.

"Suppose he should have a mistress? But he has not wit enough for that," she thought, "and then he is too fond of me. Didn't he tell Madame Roguin that he had never been unfaithful to me, even in thought? Why, the man is honesty itself! If any one deserves to go to heaven, he does. What he finds to say to his confessor, I don't know. He tells him make-believes. For a Royalist as he is (without any reason to give for it, by-the-by), he does not make much of a puff of

his religion. Poor dear, he slips out to mass at eight o'clock as if he were running off to amuse himself on the sly. It is the fear of God that he has before his eyes; he does not trouble himself much about hell. How should he have a mistress? He keeps so close to my apron-strings that I get tired of it. He loves me like the apple of his eye; he would put out his eyes for me. All these nineteen years he has never spoken a harsh word to myself. I come before his daughter with him. Why, Césarine is there—— (Césarine! Césarine!) Birotteau never has a thought that he does not tell me. It was a true word he said when he came to the sign of the Little Sailor and told me that it would take time to know him. And he's gone!—— that is the extraordinary thing!"

She turned her head with an effort and peered into the darkness. Night filled the room with picturesque effects, the despair of language, the exclusive province of the painter of genre. What words could reproduce the whimsical shapes that the curtains took as the draft swelled them, or the startling zigzag shadows that they cast? The dim night-light flickered over the red cotton folds; the brass rosette of the curtain-rest reflected the crimson gleams from a central boss, blood-shot like a robber's eye; a ghostly gown was kneeling there; the room was filled, in fact, with all the strange, unfamiliar appearances which appal the imagination at a time when it can only see horrors and exaggerate them.

Mme. Birotteau fancied that she saw a bright light in the next room, and a thought of fire flashed across her; but she caught sight of a red bandanna handkerchief, which looked to her like a pool of blood, and in another moment she discovered traces of a struggle in the arrangement of the furniture, and could think of nothing but burglars. She remembered that there was a sum of money in the safe, and a generous fear extinguished the cold ague of nightmare. Thoroughly alarmed, she sprang out on to the floor in her night-dress, to

go to the assistance of the husband whom she fancied as engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with assassins.

"Birotteau! Birotteau!" she cried in a voice of anguish.

The retail perfumer was standing in the middle of the adjacent room, apparently engaged in measuring the air with a yard-stick. His dressing-gown (of green cotton with chocolate-colored spots) covered him so ill that his bare legs were red with the cold, but he did not seem to notice this.

When César turned round with a "Well, what is it, Constance?" he looked as a man absorbed by his schemes is apt to look—so ludicrously foolish, that Mme. Birotteau began to laugh.

"Dear me, César, how queer you look!" said she. "What made you leave me alone without saying anything? I nearly died of fright. I did not know what to think. What are you after, open to every wind that blows? You will catch your death of cold. Birotteau! do you hear?"

"Yes, wife; here I am," and the perfumer returned to the bedroom.

"There, come along and warm yourself, and tell me what crotchet you have in your head," returned Mme. Birotteau, raking among the ashes, which she hastily tried to rekindle. "I am frozen. How stupid it was of me to get up in my night-dress! But I really thought you were being murdered."

The merchant set down the bedroom candlestick on the mantel, huddled himself in his dressing-gown, and looked about the room in an absent fashion for his wife's flannel petticoat.

"Here, pussie, just put this on," said he. "Twenty-two by eighteen——" he added, continuing his soliloquy. "We could have a magnificent drawing-room."

"Look here! Birotteau, you seem to be in a fair way to lose your wits. Are you dreaming?"

"No; I am thinking, wife."

"Then you might wait; your follies will keep till daylight, at any rate," cried she, and, fastening her petticoat under her sleeping-jacket, she went to open the door of their daughter's room.

"Césarine is fast asleep. She will not hear a word. Come, Birotteau, tell me about it. What is it?"

"We can give the ball."

"Give a ball! *We* give a ball! My dear! on the word of an honest woman, you are dreaming!"

"Dreaming? not a bit of it, darling."

"Listen; you should always do your duty according to your station in life. Now the Government has brought me into prominence, I belong to the Government, and it is incumbent upon us to study its spirit and to forward its aims by developing them. The Duc de Richelieu has just put an end to the occupation of the allied troops. According to Monsieur de la Billardière, official functionaries who represent the city of Paris ought to regard it as a duty—each in his own sphere of influence—to celebrate the liberation of French soil. Let us establish beyond proof a genuine patriotism which shall put those accursed schemers that call themselves Liberals to the blush, eh? Do you think that I do not love my country? I mean to show the Liberals and my enemies that to love the King is to love France."

"Then do you think that you have any enemies, my poor Birotteau?"

"Why, yes, we have enemies, wife. And half our friends in the quarter are among them. They all say, 'Birotteau has such luck; Birotteau was once a nobody, and look at him now! He is deputy-mayor; everything has prospered with him.' Very well; there is a nice disappointment still in store for them. You shall be the first to hear that I am a chevalier of the Legion of Honor; the King signed the patent yesterday."

"Oh! well then, dear, we must give the ball," cried Mme.

Birotteau, greatly excited. "But what can you have done so great as to have the cross?"

Birotteau was embarrassed.

"When Monsieur de la Billardière told me about it yesterday," said he, "I asked myself, just as you did, what claim I had to it. But, after thinking it over, I saw that I deserved it, and ended by approving the action of the Government. To begin with, I am a Royalist, and I was wounded at Saint-Roch in Vendémiaire; it is something, isn't it, to have borne arms for the good cause in those times? Then some of the merchants think that the way I discharged my duties as arbitrator at the Consular Tribunal had given general satisfaction; and, lastly, I am a deputy-mayor, and the King is distributing four crosses among the municipal authorities in the city of Paris. After they had gone into the claims of the deputy-mayors for a decoration, the prefect put me down at the top of the list. The King, too, is sure to know my name; thanks to old Ragon, I supply him with the only hair powder he will use; no one else has the recipe for the powder the late Queen used to wear, poor dear august victim! The mayor backed me up with all his might. What was I to do? If the King gives me the cross when I don't ask him for it, it looks to me as if I could not decline it without failing in respect. Was it my doing that I was made a deputy-mayor? So as we have the wind in our sails, wife, as your uncle Pillerault says when he is in a joking humor, I have made up my mind that we must live up to our high position. If I am to be somebody, I will have a try at being whatever Providence meant me to be; a sub-prefect, if such is my destiny. And you make a great mistake, wife, when you imagine that a citizen has discharged all the duty he owes his country when he has supplied his customers with scent across the counter for a score of years. If the State demands the coöperation of our intelligence, we are as much bound to give it as to pay succession duty or the door and window tax, *et cetera*. Do you

want to sit at your desk all your life? You have been there a pretty long time (God be thanked). The ball will be a private fête of our own. No more of the store; for *you*, that is. I shall burn the signboard THE QUEEN OF ROSES, and the words, CÉSAR BIROTTEAU (LATE RAGON), RETAIL PERFUMER, shall be painted out on the store-front. I shall simply put up PERFUMERY in big gold letters instead. There will be room on the mezzanine floor for a cash desk and the safe, and a nice little room for you. I shall make the back-store and the present dining-room and kitchen into a warehouse. Then I mean to take the second floor next door, and make a way into it through the wall. The staircase must be altered so that we can walk on the level out of one house and into the other. We shall have a fine set of rooms then, furnished up to the nines.

"Yes. I will have your room done up and contrive a boudoir for you, and Césarine shall have a pretty room. You must engage a young lady for the store, and she and the assistant and your waiting-maid (yes, madame, you shall have a waiting-maid) shall have rooms on the third floor. The kitchen must be on the fourth floor. The cook and the errand-boy shall be lodged up there, and we will keep the stock of bottles, and flasks, and china on the fifth. The workrooms can be in the attics, so when people come in they will not see bottles being filled and stoppered and labeled, nor sachets being made. That sort of thing is all very well for the Rue Saint-Denis, but it won't do in the Rue Saint-Honoré! Bad style. Our store ought to be as snug as a drawing-room. Just tell me this: are we the only perfumers who have come in for honors? Aren't there vinegar-makers and mustard manufacturers who have a command in the National Guard, and are well looked on at the Tuileries? Let us do as they do, and extend the business, at the same time making our way in society."

"One moment, Birotteau. Do you know what I think while

I hear you talk? Well, to me, it is just as if a man was starting out on a wild-goose chase. Don't you remember what I told you when there was talk of your being made mayor? A quiet life before all things, I said; you are about as fit for public life as my arm for a windmill sail. Grand doings will be the ruin of you.

"You did not listen to me; and here the ruin has come upon us. If you are going to take part in politics, you must have money; and have we money? What! you mean to burn the signboard that cost six hundred francs, and give up the Queen of Roses and your real glory? Leave ambition to other people. If you put your hand in the fire, you get singed, don't you? Politics are very hot nowadays. We have a hundred thousand francs good money invested outside the business, the stock, and the factory, have we? If you have a mind to increase it, do now as you did in 1793. The funds are at seventy-two, buy *rentes;* you would have ten thousand livres a year coming in without drawing anything out of the business. Then take advantage of the transfer to marry our Césarine, sell the business, and let us go and live in your part of the world. Why, any time for these fifteen years you have talked of buying the Treasury Farm, that nice little place near Chinon, with streams, and meadows, and woods and vineyards, and crofts. It would bring you in a thousand crowns a year, and we both of us like the house. It is still to be had for sixty thousand crowns, and my gentleman must meddle and make in politics, must he?

"Just remember what we are—we are perfumers. Sixteen years ago, before you thought of the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, if any one had come and said to you, 'You will have money enough to buy the Treasury Farm,' wouldn't you have been wild with joy? Very well; and now, when you can buy the property which you wanted so much that you talked of nothing else every time that you opened your mouth, you begin to talk of squan-

dering the money that we have earned by the sweat of our brows, *ours* I may say, for all along I have sat there at the desk like a dog in a kennel. Now, instead of turning five sous into six centimes, and six centimes into nothing at all, wouldn't it be better to have a daughter married to a notary in Paris, and a house that you can stay at, and to spend eight months in the year at Chinon?

"Wait until the funds rise. You can give your daughter eight thousand livres a year; we will keep two thousand for ourselves, and the sale of the business will pay for the Treasury Farm. We will take the furniture down into the country, dear, it is quite worth while, and there we can live like princes, while here one must have at least a million to cut a figure."

"That is just what I expected," said César Birotteau. "Oh! you think I am very foolish, no doubt, but I am not so foolish but that I have looked at the thing all around. Attend to what I am going to say. Alexandre Crottat is a son-in-law that would suit us to a T, and he will have Roguin's practice; but do you imagine that he would be satisfied with a hundred thousand francs? (always supposing that we pay down all our ready money when we marry our daughter; and I am of that way of thinking, for I would have nothing but dry bread for the rest of my days to see her as happy as a queen and the wife of a Paris notary, as you say). Very well, but a hundred thousand francs down, or even eight thousand francs of *rentes*, would go no way toward buying Roguin's practice.

"Young Xandrot (as we call him) thinks, like everybody else, that we are a great deal richer than we are. If that father of his, a rich farmer who sticks to his property like a leech, does not sell something like a hundred thousand francs worth of land, Xandrot will not be a notary, for Roguin's practice is worth four or five hundred thousand francs. If Crottat does not pay half the money down, how will he man-

age the business? Césarine ought to have a portion of two hundred thousand francs, and we should retire like decent citizens of Paris on fifteen thousand livres a year in the funds; that is what I should like. If I could make you see all this as clear as daylight, you would have nothing left to say for yourself, eh?"

"Oh! if you have the wealth of the Indies——" his wife returned.

"So I have, darling. Yes," he put his arm round his wife's waist, and tapped her gently with his fingers, impelled by the joy that shone from every feature of his face. "I did not want to say a word about this to you till the thing was ripe, but, faith! to-morrow perhaps it will be settled. This is it:

"Roguin has been proposing a business speculation to me, so safe that he and one or two of his clients, and Ragon, and your uncle Pillerault, are going into it. We are to buy some building land near the Madeleine. Roguin thinks that we can buy it now for a quarter of the price it will fetch in three years' time when the leases will be out, and we shall be free to exploit it. There are six of us; each agrees to take so much; I am finding three hundred thousand francs for the purchase of three-eighths. If any of us are short of money, Roguin will advance it, taking a mortgage on the share of the land as security. Pillerault, old Ragon, and I are going to take half of it among us; but I want to have it registered in my name, so as to keep hold of the handle of the pan and see how the fish are frying. Roguin himself, under the name of Monsieur Charles Claparon, will be joint-owner with me; he will give a guarantee to each of his partners, and I shall do the same with mine. The deeds of purchase will be private deeds until we have all the land in our hands. Roguin will look into it and see which of the purchases must be completed, for he is not sure that we can dispense with intermediary registration, and yet transfer a separate title to the buyers

when we break up the estate into separate lots; but it would take too long to explain it to you.

"When the building land has been paid for, we shall have nothing to do but fold our arms, and in three years' time we shall have a million. Césarine will be twenty years old, we shall have sold the business, and then, God willing, we will go modestly toward greatness."

"Well, but where are the three hundred thousand francs to come from?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"My dear little woman, you know nothing of business. There are the hundred thousand francs in Roguin's hands; I will pay them down. Then I shall borrow forty thousand francs on the buildings and the land that our factory stands on, over in the Faubourg du Temple, and we have twenty thousand francs in bills and acceptances in the portfolio—altogether that makes a hundred and sixty thousand francs. There remain a hundred and forty thousand francs to be raised; I will draw bills to the order of Charles Claparon the banker; he will advance the money, less the discount. And there are our three hundred thousand francs: and you don't owe an account until it is due. When the bills fall due we shall be ready for them with the profits of the business. If we should find any difficulty in meeting them, Roguin would lend me the money at five per cent. on a mortgage on my share of the building land. But there is no need to borrow. I have discovered a specific for making the hair grow, a Comagen oil. Livingston has put up a hydraulic press for me down yonder for the hazelnuts; all the oil should be squeezed out at once under such strong pressure. In a year's time the probabilities are that I shall have made a hundred thousand francs at least. I am thinking about a placard with DOWN WITH WIGS! for a heading. It would make a prodigious sensation. *You* don't notice how I lie awake. These three months past Macassar Oil has not let me sleep. I mean to do for Macassar!"

"So these are the fine plans that have been running in your head for a couple of months, and not a word to me about them. And I have just seen myself begging at my own door; what a warning from heaven! There will be nothing left to us after a while except our eyes to cry with over our troubles. Never shall you do it so long as I am alive; do you hear, César? There is some underhand work somewhere that you do not see; you are so straightforward and honest that you don't suspect others of cheating. What makes them come to offer you millions? You are giving bills; you are going beyond your means; and how if the Oil does not take? Suppose that the money does not come in—suppose that you do not sell the building lots, how are you going to meet the bills? With the hazelnut shells? You want to rise in the world; you don't intend to have your name over your own store-door any longer; you mean to take down the sign—the Queen of Roses—and yet you are making up rigmaroles of prospectuses and placards, and César Birotteau's name will be posted up at every street-corner and all over the hoardings, wherever there is building going on."

"Oh, no such thing! I shall open a branch business under the name of Popinot. I shall take a store somewhere near the Rue des Lombardes, and put in young Anselme Popinot to look after it. I shall pay a debt of gratitude which we owe to Monsieur and Madame Ragon by starting their nephew in a business that may make his fortune. The poor Ragons have looked very seedy for some time past, I have thought."

"There! those people are after your money."

"Why, what people, my charmer? Your own uncle who loves us like his own life, and comes to dine here every Sunday? Then there is that kind old Ragon, our predecessor, who plays boston with us; old Ragon, with a record of forty years of fair dealing. And, lastly, do you mean Roguin, a notary of Paris, a man of fifty, who has been in practice for twenty-five years? A notary of Paris would be the best of

the bunch if all honest folk were not equally good. My partners will help me out at a pinch. Where is the plot, darling? Look here, I must give you a piece of my mind. On my word as an honest man, it weighs upon me. You have always been as suspicious as a cat! As soon as we had five sous' worth of goods in the store, you began to think that the customers were thieves. A man has to go down on his knees and beg and pray of you to allow your fortune to be made. For a daughter of Paris you have scarcely any ambition! If it were not for your eternal fears, there would not be a happier man than I am. If I had listened to you, I should never have made the Pâte des Sultanes nor the Carminative Toilet Lotion. We have made a living out of the store, but it was those two discoveries and our soaps that brought in the hundred and sixty thousand francs which we have over and above the business! But for my genius, for I have talent as a perfumer, we should be petty storekeepers, hard put to it to make both ends meet, and I should not be one of the notable merchants who elect the judges at the Tribunal of Commerce; I should neither have been a judge nor a deputy-mayor. Do you know what I should have been? A storekeeper like old Ragon—no offense to him, for I respect stores; a store has been the making of us. After selling perfumery for forty years we should have had three thousand livres a year, as he has; and as prices go now, when things are twice as dear as they used to be, we too should have had hardly enough to live upon. (Day after day, it goes to my heart more and more to think of that old couple. I must come at the truth; I will have it out of Popinot to-morrow.) Yes, if I had taken advice of you, of you that are afraid of your own luck and are always asking if you will have to-morrow what you hold to-day, I should have no credit, nor the cross of the Legion of Honor, and I should not be looked on as a man who knows what he is about. Oh, you may shake your head; if this succeeds, I may be deputy for Paris some day. Aha! I was not named César for nothing;

everything has succeeded with me. This is inconceivable! Everybody out of my own house admits that I have some capacity; but here at home, the one person that I want so much to please, and I toil and moil to make her happy, is just the very one who takes me for a fool."

There was such a depth of real and constant affection in these phrases, divided up by eloquent pauses, and hurled forth like cannon balls (as is the wont of those who take up a recriminating attitude), that Mme. Birotteau in her secret heart felt touched, but, wife-like, she took advantage of the love she inspired to gain her own ends.

"Very well, Birotteau," said she, "if you love me, let me be happy in my own way. Neither you nor I have had any education; we do not know how to talk, nor how to flatter like worldly-wise people, and how can you expect that we should succeed in office under Government? I myself should be quite happy at the Treasury Farm. I have always been fond of animals and birds, and I could spend my time quite well in looking after the poultry, and living like a farmer's wife. Let us sell the business, marry our Césarine, and let your 'Imogen' alone. We will pass the winters in Paris in our son-in-law's house, and we shall be happy; nothing in politics nor in business could change our ways. Why should you try to eclipse other people? Is not our fortune enough for us? When you are a millionaire, will you be able to eat two dinners a day? Do you want another wife! Look at uncle Pillerault! He is wisely satisfied with what he has, and spends his life in doing good. What does HE want with fine furniture? For I know you have been ordering furniture; I saw Braschon in the shop, and he was not here to buy scent."

"Well, yes, darling, there is some furniture ordered for you. The workmen will begin to-morrow under an architect recommended by Monsieur de la Billardière."

"Good Lord, have mercy upon us!"

"Why, you are unreasonable, pet. Do you think that, fresh and pretty as you are, you can go and bury yourself at thirty-seven at Chinon? I myself, thank the Lord, am only thirty-nine. Chance has opened up a fine career to me, and I am going to enter upon it. If I manage wisely, I can found a house famous among Paris citizens, as people used to do, build up a business, and the Birotteaus shall be like Roguin, Cochin, Guillaume, Le Bas, Nucingen, Saillard, Popinot, and Matifat, all of whom are making, or have made, their mark in their quarter. Come! come! if this speculation were not as safe as gold ingots——"

"Safe!"

"Yes, safe. I have been reckoning it out these two months. Without appearing to do so, I have been making inquiries as to building, at the Hôtel de Ville, and of architects and contractors. Monsieur Grindot, the young architect who is to remodel our place, is in despair because he has no capital to invest in our speculation."

"He knows that there will be houses to build; he is urging you on so as to gobble you up."

"Can people like Pillerault, like Charles Claparon, and Roguin be taken in? The gain is as certain as the profits on the *Pâte*, you see."

"But why should Roguin want to speculate, dear, when he has bought his practice and made his fortune? I see him go by sometimes; he looks as thoughtful as a minister; he has an underhand look that I do not like; he has secret cares. In five years he has come to look like an old rake. Whose word have you for it that he will not take to his heels as soon as your money is in his hands? Such things have been known. Do we know much about him? It is true that we have been acquainted for fifteen years, but he is not one that I would put my hands into the fire for. I have it! he has ozæna; he does not live with his wife; he has mistresses no doubt, and they are ruining him;

there is no other reason for his low spirits that I see. As I dress in the morning, I look through the blinds, and I see him going home on foot. Where does he come from? Nobody knows. It looks to me as if he had another establishment somewhere in town, and he spends one way and madame another.

"Is that a life for a notary? If they make fifty thousand francs and get through sixty thousand, there will be an end of the money; in twenty years' time they would be as bare as shorn lambs; but if a man is used to shine, he will plunder his friends without mercy. Charity should properly begin at home. That little rascal du Tillet, who used to be with us, is one of his cronies, and I see nothing good in that friendship. If he could not find out du Tillet he is very blind; and if he knows him, why does he make so much of him? You will say that there is something between Roguin's wife and du Tillet. Very well; I look for no good from a man who has no sense of honor where his wife is concerned. And in any case, aren't the owners of the building lots very stupid to sell the worth of a hundred francs for a hundred sous? If you were to meet a child who did not know what a louis was worth, would you not tell him? Your stroke of business looks to me myself very much like a robbery, no offense to you."

"Dear me! what queer things women are sometimes, and how they mix up their ideas! If Roguin had never meddled in the matter, you would have said, 'Stay, César, stop a bit; you are acting without consulting Roguin, it will come to no good.' In this present instance he is pledged as it were, and you tell me——"

"No; it is a Monsieur Claparon."

"But a notary's name cannot appear in a speculation."

"Then why should he do something against the law? What do you say to *that*, you who are such a stickler for the law?"

"Just let me go on. Roguin is going into it himself, and you tell me that it will come to no good. Is that sensible? Again you say, 'He is doing something against the law.' But his name will appear in it if necessary. And now you tell me that 'he is rich.' Might not people say as much of me? Ragon and Pillerault might just as well say of me, 'Why are you going into this when you are wallowing in riches?'"

"A tradesman is one thing and a notary another," objected Mme. Birotteau.

"In short, my conscience is quite clear," César went on. "People who sell, sell because they cannot help it; we are no more robbing them than we rob fund-holders when we buy at seventy-five. To-day you buy building lots at to-day's prices; in two years' time it will be different, just as it is with *rentes*. You may be quite sure, Constance-Barbe-Joséphine Pillerault, that you will never catch César Birotteau doing anything that is against the law, nor against his conscience, nor unscrupulous, or not strictly just and fair. That a man who has been in business eighteen years should be suspected in his own family of cheating!"

"Come, César, be pacified! A wife who has known you all that time knows the depths of your soul. You are the master after all. You made the money, didn't you? It is yours; you can spend it. We might be brought to the lowest depths of poverty, but neither your daughter nor I would ever say a single word of reproach. But listen. When you invented the Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, what risk did you run? Five or six thousand francs perhaps. To-day you are risking all you have on a single stake, and you are not the only player in this game, and some of the others may turn out sharper than you are.

"You could give this ball and have the rooms redecorated, and spend a thousand francs over it—a useless expense, but not ruinous—but as to the Madeleine affair, I am against it,

once and for all. Your are a perfumer; be a perfumer and not a speculator in building land. We women have an instinct that does not lead us astray. I have warned you; now act on your own ideas. You have been a judge at the Tribunal of Commerce, you know the law, you have steered your boat wisely, and I will follow you, César! But I shall have misgivings until I see our fortune on a sound basis and Césarine well married. God send that my dream was not prophetic!"

This meekness was annoying to Birotteau. He had recourse to a simple stratagem, which he found useful on such occasions.

"Listen, Constance; I have not really given my word, though it is as good as if I had."

"Oh! César, there is nothing more to be said, so let us say no more about it. Honor before riches. Come, get into bed, dear; there is no firewood left. Beside, it is easier to talk in bed if it amuses you. Oh! the bad dream I had! Good Lord, to see *yourself!* Why, it was fearful! Césarine and I will make a pretty number of novenas for the success of the land."

"Of course, the help of God would do us no harm," Birotteau said gravely, "but the essence of hazelnuts is a power likewise, wife. I discovered this, like the Pâte des Sultanes, by accident; the first time it was by opening a book, but it was an engraving of 'Hero and Leander' that suggested this new idea to me. A woman, you know, pouring oil on her lover's head; isn't it nice? The most certain speculations are those that are based on vanity, self-love, or a regard for appearances. Those sentiments will never be extinct."

"Alas, I see that clearly."

"At a certain age," pursued Birotteau, "men will do anything to grow hair on their heads when they have none. Hairdressers have told me for some time past that they are selling hair-dyes and all sorts of drugs that are said to pro-

mote the growth of the hair as well as Macassar Oil. Since the peace, men live more among women, and women do not like bald heads, eh! eh! pet! So the demand for that class of article can be explained by the political situation.

"A composition which would keep your hair in good condition would sell like bread, and all the more so because the essence will doubtless be approved by the Académie des Sciences. Perhaps kind Monsieur Vauquelin will do me another good turn. I shall go to submit my notion to him to-morrow, and ask him to accept that engraving which I have found at last after inquiring for it for two years in Germany. Monsieur Vauquelin is engaged in analyzing hair, precisely the subject, so Chiffreville (who is associated with him in the production of chemicals) tells me. If my discovery concurs with his, my essence will be bought by both sexes. There is a fortune in my idea, I repeat. Good heavens! I cannot sleep for it. Eh! luckily, little Popinot has the finest head of hair in the world. With a young lady in the shop whose hair should reach to the ground, and who should say (if the thing is possible without sinning against God or your neighbor) that the Comagen Oil (for it is decidedly an oil) counts for something in bringing that about; all the grizzled heads will be down upon it like poverty upon the world. And I say, dearie, how about your ball? I am not spiteful, but I really should like to have that little rogue of a du Tillet, who swaggers about and never sees me on 'Change. He knows that I know something that is not pretty about him. Perhaps I let him off too easily. How funny it is, wife, that one should always be punished for good actions; here below, of course! I have been like a father to him; you do not know all that I have done for him."

"Simply to hear you talk of him makes my flesh creep. If you had known what he intended to do to you, you would not have kept the theft of three thousand francs so quiet (for I have guessed how the thing was arranged). If you had put

him in the police court, perhaps you might have done a good many people a service."

"What did he mean to do to me?"

"Nothing. Birotteau, if you were inclined to listen to me to-night, I would give you a bit of sound advice, and that is to let du Tillet alone."

"Would not people think it very strange if I were to forbid an old assistant my house after I had been his surety for twenty thousand francs when he first started in business for himself? There, let us do good for its own sake. And perhaps du Tillet has mended his ways."

"Everything must be put topsy-turvy here!"

"What is this about topsy-turvy? Why, it will all be ruled like a sheet of music. So you have forgotten already what I have just told you about the staircase, and how I have arranged with Cayron, the umbrella merchant next door, to take part of his house! He and I must go together in the morning to see his landlord, Monsieur Molineux. I have as much business on hand to-morrow as a minister."

"You have made me dizzy with your plans," said Constance; "I am muddled with them; and, beside, Birotteau, I am sleepy."

"Good-morning," returned her husband. "Just listen—I say good-morning, because it is morning now, pet! Ah! she has dropped off to sleep, dear child! There! you shall be the richest of the rich, or my name will not be César any longer," and a few minutes later Constance and César were peacefully snoring.

A rapid glance over the previous history of this household will confirm the impression which should have been conveyed by the friendly dispute between the two principal personages in this scene, in which the lives of a retail storekeeper and his wife are depicted. This sketch will explain, moreover, the strange chances by which César Birotteau became a perfumer,

a deputy-mayor, an ex-officer of the National Guard, and a chevalier of the Legion of Honor. By laying bare the depths of his character and the springs of his greatness, it will be possible to comprehend how it is that the vicissitudes of commerce, which strong heads turn to their advantage, become irreparable catastrophes for weaker spirits. Events are never absolute; their consequences depend entirely upon the individual. The misfortune which is a stepping-stone for genius becomes a chapel for the Christian, a treasure for a quick-witted man, and for weaklings an abyss.

A cotter, Jacques Birotteau by name, living near Chinon, took unto himself a wife, a domestic servant in the house of a lady, who employed him in her vineyard. Three sons were born to them; his wife died at the birth of the third, and the poor fellow did not long survive her. Then the mistress, out of affection for her maid, adopted the oldest of the cotter's boys; she brought him up with her own son, and placed him in a seminary. This François Birotteau took orders, and during the Revolution led the wandering life of priests who would not take the oath, hiding from those who hunted them down like wild beasts, lucky to meet with no worse fate than the guillotine. At the time when this story begins he was a priest of the cathedral at Tours, and had but once left that city to see his brother César. On that occasion the traffic in the streets of Paris so bewildered the good man that he dared not leave his room; he called the cabs "half-coaches," and was astonished at everything. He stayed one week, and then went back to Tours, promising himself that he would never revisit the capital.

The vine-dresser's second son, Jean Birotteau, was drawn by the army, and during the early wars of the Revolution promptly became a captain. At the battle of the Trebbia, Macdonald called for volunteers to storm a battery, and Captain Jean Birotteau charged with his company and fell. It

appeared to be the destiny of the Birotteaus that other men should supplant them, or that events should be too strong for them wherever they might be.

The youngest son is the chief actor in this scene. When César was fourteen years old, and could read, write, and cipher, he left the district, and with one louis in his pocket set out on foot for Paris to make his fortune. On the recommendation of an apothecary in Tours, M. and Mme. Ragon, retail perfumers, took him as errand boy. César at that time was possessed of a pair of hobnailed shoes, a pair of breeches, blue stockings, a sprigged vest, a countryman's jacket, three ample shirts of good linen, and a stout walking-cane. His hair might be clipped like a chorister's, but he was a solidly built Tourangeau; and any tendency to the laziness rampant in his district was counteracted in him by a strong desire to make his way in the world. Perhaps he was lacking somewhat in brains as in education, but he had inherited upright instincts and scrupulous integrity from his mother, who had "a heart of gold," as they say in Touraine.

César was paid six francs a month by way of wages. He boarded in the house, and slept on a truckle-bed in the attics next to the servant's room. The clerks showed him how to fetch and carry and tie up parcels, to sweep out the store and the pavement before it, and made a butt of him, breaking him in to business after the manner of their kind, and contriving to blend a good deal of amusement (for themselves) with his instruction. M. and Mme. Ragon spoke to him as if he were a dog. Nobody cared how tired the apprentice might be, and he was often very tired and footsore of a night after tramping over the pavements, and his shoulders often ached. The principle "each for himself," that gospel of great cities, put in application, made César's life in Paris a very hard one. He used to cry sometimes when the day was over and he thought of Touraine, where the peasant works leisurely and the mason takes his time about laying a stone, and toil is

judiciously tempered by idleness; but he usually fell asleep before he reached the point of thinking of running away, for his morning's round of work awaited him, and he did his duty with the instinctive obedience of a yard dog. If he happened to complain, the first clerk would smile jocosely. "Ah, my boy," said he, "life is not all roses at the Queen of Roses, and larks don't drop ready roasted into your mouth; first catch your lark, and then you want the other things before you cook it."

The cook, a stout Picarde, kept the best morsels for herself, and never spoke to César but to complain of M. and Mme. Ragon, who left her nothing to purloin. On one Sunday at the end of every month she was obliged to stop in the house, and then she broke ground with César. Ursule, scoured for Sunday, was a charming creature in the eyes of the poor errand boy, who, but for a chance, was about to make shipwreck on the first sunken reef in his career. Like all human beings who have no one to care for them, he fell in love with the first woman who gave him a kind glance. The cook took César under her wing and secret love passages followed, at which the assistants jeered unmercifully. Luckily, two years later, the cook threw over César for a young runaway from the army, a fellow-countryman of hers who was hiding in Paris; and the Picard, a landowner to the extent of several acres, allowed himself to be drawn into a marriage with Ursule.

But during those two years the cook fed her lad César well, and explained to him the seamy side of not a few of the mysteries of Paris. Motives of jealousy led her to instil into him a perfect horror of low haunts, whose perils seemingly were not unknown to her. In 1792 César, the basely deserted, had grown accustomed to his life; his feet were used to the pavements, his shoulders accommodated to packing-cases, his wits to what he called the *humbug* of Paris. So, when Ursule threw him over, he promptly took comfort, for she had not

realized any of his intuitive ideas as to sentiments. Lascivious, bad-tempered, fawning, and rapacious, a selfish woman, given to drink, she had jarred on Birotteau's unsophisticated nature and had opened out no fair future to him. At times the poor boy saw with dismay that he was bound by the strongest of ties, for a simple heart, to a creature with whom he had no sympathy. By the time that he was set free he had developed and had reached the age of sixteen. His wits had been sharpened by Ursule and by the clerk's jokes; he set himself to learn the business. Intelligence was hidden beneath his simplicity. He watched the customers with shrewd eyes. In his spare moments he asked for explanations concerning the goods; he remembered where everything was kept; one fine day he knew the goods, prices, and quantities in stock better than the newer comers, and thenceforward M. and Mme. Ragon looked on him as a settled institution.

When the requisition of the terrible year II. made a clean sweep of Citizen Ragon's house, César Birotteau, promoted to be second assistant, improved his position, received a salary of fifty livres per month, and seated himself at the Ragons' table with joy unspeakable. The second assistant at the sign of the Queen of Roses had by this time saved six hundred francs, and he now had a room filled with furniture such as he had for a long time coveted, in which he could keep the belongings which he had accumulated, under lock and key. On Décadis,* dressed after the fashion of an epoch which affected rough and homely ways, the quiet, humble peasant lad looked at least the equal of other young citizens, and in this way he overleaped the social barriers which in domestic life would, in different times, have been raised between the peasant and the trading classes. Toward the end of that year his honesty won for him the control of the till. The awe-inspiring Citizeness Ragon saw to his linen, and husband and wife treated him like one of the family.

* Each tenth day, replacing Sunday.

In Vendémiaire 1794 César Birotteau, being possessed of one hundred gold louis, exchanged them for six thousand francs in assignats, bought *rentes* therewith at thirty francs, paid for them when depreciated prices ruled on the Exchange, and hoarded his stock-receipt with unspeakable delight. From that day forward he followed the rise and fall of the funds and the course of events with a secret anxiety that made his heart beat fast at the tidings of every victory or defeat which marked the history of that period.

At this critical period M. Ragon, sometime purveyor of perfumes to her majesty Queen Marie-Antoinette, confided to César Birotteau his attachment to the fallen tyrants. This confidence was an event of capital importance in César's life. The Tourangeau was transformed into a fanatical adherent of royalty in the course of the evening conversations after the shutters were put up, the books posted, and the streets quiet without. César was simply obeying his natural instincts. His imagination kindled at the tale of the virtuous deeds of Louis XVI., followed by anecdotes told by husband and wife of the good qualities of the Queen whom they extolled. His tender heart was revolted by the horrible fate of the two crowned heads, struck off but a few paces from the store-door, and he conceived a hatred for a system of government which poured forth innocent blood that cost nothing to shed.

Commercial instincts made him quick to see the death of trade in the law of maximum prices, and in political storms, which always bode ill to business. In his quality of perfumer, moreover, he loathed a Revolution that forbade powder and was responsible for the fashion of wearing the hair cropped. The tranquillity secured to the nation by an absolute monarchy seemed to be the one possible condition in which life and property would be safe, so he waxed zealous for a monarchy.

M. Ragon, finding so apt a disciple, made him his assistant in the shop, and initiated him into the secrets of the Queen of Roses. Some of the customers were the most active and

devoted of the secret agents of the Bourbons and kept up a correspondence between Paris and the west. Carried away by youthful enthusiasm, electrified by contact with such men as Georges, La Billardière, Montauran, Bauvan, Longuy, Manda, Bernier, du Guénic, and Fontaine, César flung himself into the conspiracy of the 13th Vendémiaire, when Royalists and Terrorists combined against the dying Convention.

César had the honor of warring against Napoleon on the steps of the church of Saint-Roch, and was wounded at the beginning of the action. Every one knows the result of this attempt. The obscurity from which Barras' aide-de-camp then emerged was Birotteau's salvation. A few friends carried the bellicose counterhand home to the Queen of Roses, where he lay in hiding in the garret, nursed by Mme. Ragon, and lucky to be forgotten. César's military courage had been nothing but a flash. During his month of convalescence he came to some sound conclusions as to the ludicrous alliance of politics and perfumery. If a Royalist he remained, he made up his mind that he would be simply and solely a Royalist perfumer, that he would never compromise himself again, and he threw himself body and soul into his calling.

After the 18th Brumaire, M. and Mme. Ragon, despairing of the Royalist cause, determined to retire from the perfumery trade, to live like respectable private citizens, and to cease to meddle in politics. If they were to receive the full value of their business, it behooved them to find a man who had more honesty than ambition, and more homely sense than brilliancy, so Ragon broached the matter to his first assistant. Birotteau hesitated. He was twenty years old, with a thousand francs a year invested in the public funds; it was his ambition to go to live near Chinon as soon as he should have fifteen hundred francs a year, and the First Consul, after consolidating his position at the Tuileries, should have consolidated the national debt. He asked himself why he should risk his little honestly earned independence in business. He

had never expected to make so much wealth; it was entirely owing to chances which are only embraced in youth; and now he was thinking of taking a wife in Touraine, a woman who should have an equal fortune, so that he might buy and cultivate a little property called the Treasury Farm, a bit of land on which he had set longing eyes since he had come to man's estate. He dreamed of adding more land to the Treasury Farm, of making a thousand crowns a year, of leading a happy and obscure life there. He was on the point of refusing the perfumer's offer when love suddenly altered his former resolutions and multiplied the sum-total of his ambitions by ten.

Since Ursule's base desertion, César had led a steady life; this was partly a consequence of hard work, partly a dread of the risks run in pursuit of pleasure in Paris. Desire that remains unsatisfied becomes a craving, and marriage for the lower middle classes becomes a fixed idea, for it is the one way open to them of winning and appropriating a woman. César Birotteau was in this case. The first assistant was the responsible person at the Queen of Roses; he had not a moment to spare for amusement. In such a life the craving is still more imperatively felt; so it happened that the apparition of a handsome girl, to whom a dissipated young fellow would scarcely have given a thought, was bound to make the greatest impression on the steady César.

One fine June day, as he was about to cross the Pont Marie to the Ile Saint-Louis, he saw a girl standing in the doorway of a corner store on the Quai d'Anjou. Constance Pillerault was a forewoman in a dry goods establishment, at the sign of the Little Sailor, a pioneer instance of a kind of store which has since spread all over Paris, with painted signboards more or less in evidence, flying flags, much display. Shawls are suspended in the windows, and piles of cravats erected like card castles, together with countless devices to attract custom, ribbon streamers, showcards, notices of fixed prices; optical

illusions and effects carried to the pitch of perfection which has made of store windows the fairyland of commerce.

The low prices asked at the sign of the Little Sailor for the goods described as "novelties" had brought this store, in one of the quietest and least fashionable quarters of Paris, an unheard-of influx of custom.

The aforesaid young lady behind the counter was as celebrated for her beauty as "La belle Limonadière" of the Café des Milles Colonnes at a later day, and not a few others whose unfortunate lot it has been to attract faces, young and old, more numerous than the paving-stones of Paris, to the windows of milliners' stores and cafés. The first assistant from the Queen of Roses, whose life was spent between Saint-Roch and the Rue de la Sourdière, in the daily routine of the perfumery business, did not so much as suspect the existence of the Little Sailor, for retailers in Paris know very little of each other.

César was so violently smitten with the beautiful Constance that he hurried tempestuously into the Little Sailor to bargain for a half-dozen linen shirts. Long did he haggle over the price, bale after bale of linen was displayed for his inspection; he behaved exactly like an Englishwoman in a humor for shopping. The young lady condescended to interest herself in César's purchase; perceiving, by certain signs which women understand, that he had come to the shop more for the sake of the saleswoman than for her goods. He gave his name and address to the young lady, who became quite indifferent to the customer's admiration as soon as he had made his purchase. The poor assistant had done but little to gain Ursule's good graces; if he had been sheepish then, love now made him more sheepish still; he did not dare to say a syllable, and was, moreover, too much dazzled to note the indifference which succeeded to the smiles of this siren of commerce.

Every evening for a week he took up his post before the Little Sailor, hanging about for a glance as a dog waits for a

bone at a kitchen-door; regardless of the gibes in which the clerks and saleswomen indulged at his expense; making way meekly for customers or passers-by, watchful of every little change that took place in the store. A few days later, he again entered the paradise where his angel dwelt, not so much to purchase pocket-handkerchiefs of her as with a view of communicating a luminous idea to the angel's mind.

"If you should require any perfumery, mademoiselle," he remarked, as he paid the bill, "I could supply you in the same way."

Constance Pillerault daily received brilliant proposals in which there was never any mention of marriage; and though her heart was as pure as her white forehead, it was not until the indefatigable César had proved his love by six months of strategical operations that she deigned to receive his attentions. Even then she would not commit herself. Prudence had been demanded of her by the multitudinous number of her admirers—wholesale wine merchants, well-to-do barkeepers, and others, who made eyes at her. The lover found a supporter in her guardian, M. Claude-Joseph Pillerault, an iron-monger on the Quai de la Ferraille, a discovery made by the secret espionage which is pre-eminently a lover's shift.

In this rapid sketch, it is impossible to describe the delights of this harmless Parisian love-intrigue; the little extravagances characteristic of the clerk—the first melons of the season, the little dinners at Vénua's, followed by the theatre, the drives into the country in a cab on Sunday—must be passed over in silence. César was not a positively handsome young fellow, but there was nothing in his appearance to repel love. Life in Paris and days spent in a dark store had toned down the high color natural to the peasant lad. His thick, black hair, his Norman breadth of shoulder, his sturdy limbs, his simple, straightforward look, all contributed to prepossess people in his favor. Uncle Pillerault, the responsible guardian of his brother's child, made various inquiries about the Tourangeau,

and gave his consent; and, in the fair month of May, 1800, Mlle. Pillerault promised to marry César Birotteau. He nearly fainted with joy when Constance-Barbe-Joséphine accepted him as her husband under a lime tree at Sceaux.

"You will have a good husband, my little girl," said M. Pillerault. "He has a warm heart and sentiments of honor. He is as straight as a line, and as good as the Child Jesus; he is a king of men, in short."

Constance put away once and for all the dreams of a brilliant future, which, like most store-girls, she had sometimes indulged. She meant to be a faithful wife and a good mother, and took up this life in accordance with the religious programme of the middle classes. After all, this part suited her ideas much better than the dangerous vanities tempting to a youthful Parisian imagination. Constance's intelligence was a narrow one; she was the typical small tradesman's wife, who always grumbles a little over her work, who refuses a thing at the outset, and is vexed when she is taken at her word; whose restless activity takes all things, from cash-box to kitchen, as its province, and supervises everything, from the weightiest business transactions down to almost invisible darns in the household linen. Such a woman scolds while she loves, and can only conceive ideas of the very simplest; only the small change, as it were, of thought passes current with her; she argues about everything, lives in chronic fear of the unknown, makes constant forecasts, and is always thinking of the future. Her statuesque yet girlish beauty, her engaging looks, her freshness, prevented César from thinking of her shortcomings; and, moreover, she made up for them by a woman's sensitive conscientiousness, an excessive thrift, by her fanatical love of work, and genius as a saleswoman.

Constance was just eighteen years old, and the possessor of eleven thousand francs. César, in whom love had developed the most unbounded ambition, bought the perfumery business,

and transplanted the Queen of Roses to a handsome store near the Place Vendôme. He was only twenty-one years of age, married to a beautiful and adored wife, and almost the owner of his establishment, for he had paid three-fourths of the amount. He saw (how should he have seen otherwise?) the future in fair colors, which seemed fairer still as he measured his career from its starting-point.

Roguin (Ragon's notary) drew up the marriage-contract, and gave sage counsels to the young perfumer; he it was who interfered when the latter was about to complete the purchase of the business with his wife's money. "Just keep the money by you, my boy; ready money is sometimes a handy thing in a business," he had said.

Birotteau gazed at the notary in admiration, fell into the habit of consulting him, and made a friend of Roguin. Like Ragon and Pillerault, he had so much faith in notaries as a class that he placed himself in Roguin's hands without admitting a doubt of him. Thanks to this advice, César started business with the eleven thousand francs brought him by Constance; and would not have "changed places" with the First Consul, however brilliant Napoleon's lot might seem to be.

At first the Birotteau establishment had but one servant-maid. They lodged on the mezzanine floor above the store. In this sort of den, passably furnished by an upholsterer, the newly wedded pair entered upon a perennial honeymoon. Mme. César at her cash desk was a marvel to see. Her famous beauty exercised an enormous influence on the sales; the dandies of the Empire talked of nothing but the lovely Mme. Birotteau. If César's political principles were tainted with royalism, it was acknowledged that his business principles were above suspicion; and if some of his fellow-tradesmen envied him his luck, he was believed to deserve it. That shot on the steps of the church of Saint-Roch had gained him a certain reputation—he was looked upon as a brave man, and

a man deep in political secrets; though he had nothing of a soldier's courage in his composition, and not even a rudimentary political notion in his head.

On these data the good folk of the arrondissement made him a captain of the National Guard, but he was cashiered by Napoleon (according to Birotteau, that matter of Vendémiaire still rankled in the First Consul's mind), and thenceforward César was invested with a certain halo of martyrdom, cheaply acquired, which made him interesting to opponents and gave him a certain importance.

Here, in brief, is the history of this household, so happy in itself, and disturbed by none but the ever-recurring business cares.

During the first year, César instructed his wife in all the ins and outs of the perfumery business, which she was admirably quick to grasp; she might have been brought into the world for that sole purpose, so well did she adapt herself to her customers. The result of the stocktaking at the end of the year alarmed the ambitious perfumer. After deducting all expenses, he might perhaps hope, in twenty years' time, to make the modest sum of a hundred thousand francs, the price of his felicity. He determined then and there to find some speedier road to fortune, and, by way of a beginning, to be a manufacturer as well as a retailer.

Acting against his wife's counsel, he took the lease of a shed on some building land in the Faubourg du Temple, and painted up thereon, in huge letters, CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S FACTORY. He enticed a workman from Grasse, and with him began to manufacture several kinds of soap, essences, and eau-de-cologne, on the system of half-profits. The partnership only lasted six months and ended in a loss, which he had to sustain alone; but Birotteau did not lose heart. He meant to obtain a result at any price, if it were only to escape a scolding from his wife; and, indeed, he confessed to her afterward that, in those days of despair, his head used to boil like a pot

on the fire, and that many a time, but for his religious principles, he would have thrown himself into the Seine.

One day, depressed by several unsuccessful experiments, he was sauntering home to dinner along the boulevards (the lounger in Paris is a man in despair quite as often as a genuine idler), when a book among a basketful at six sous a piece caught his attention; his eyes were attracted by the yellow, dusty title-page. It ran, "Abdeker, or the Art of Preserving Beauty."

Birotteau took up the work. It claimed to be a translation from the Arabic, but in reality it was a sort of romance written by a physician in the previous century. César happened to stumble upon a passage therein which treated of perfumes, and, with his back against a tree in the boulevard, he turned the pages over till he reached a footnote, wherein the learned author discoursed of the nature of the dermis and epidermis. The writer showed conclusively that such and such an unguent or soap often produced an effect exactly opposite to that intended, and the ointment, or the soap, acted as a tonic upon a skin that required a lenitive treatment, or *vice versâ*.

Birotteau saw a fortune in the book, and bought it. Yet, feeling little confidence in his unaided lights, he went to Vauquelin, the celebrated chemist, and in all simplicity asked him how to compose a double cosmetic which should produce the required effect upon the human epidermis in either case. The really learned—men so truly great in this sense that they can never receive in their lifetime all the fame that should reward vast labors like theirs—are almost always helpful and kindly to the poor in intellect. So it was with Vauquelin. He came to the assistance of the perfumer, gave him a formula for a paste to whiten the hands, and allowed him to style himself its inventor. It was this cosmetic that Birotteau called the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes. The more thoroughly to accomplish his purpose, he used the recipe for the paste for a

wash for the complexion, which he called the Carminative Toilet Lotion.

He took a hint from the Little Sailor, and was the first among perfumers to make the lavish use of placards, hand-bills, and divers kinds of advertisements, which, perhaps not undeservedly, are called quackery. The Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion were introduced to the polite world and to commerce by gorgeous placards, with the words APPROVED BY THE INSTITUTE at the head. The effect of this formula, employed thus for the first time, was magical. Not France only, but the face of Europe was covered with flaming proclamations, yellow, scarlet, and blue, which informed the world that the sovereign lord of the Queen of Roses manufactured, kept in stock, and supplied everything in his line of business at moderate charges.

At a time when the east was the one topic of conversation, in a country where every man has a natural turn for the part of a sultan, and every woman is no less minded to become a sultana, the idea of giving to any cosmetic such a name as the Pâte des Sultanes might have occurred to any ordinary man, it needed no cleverness to foresee its fascination; but the public always judges by results, and Birotteau's reputation for business ability but grew the more when he indited a prospectus, and the very absurdity of its language contributed to its success. In France we only laugh at men and things who are talked about, and those who fail to make any mark are not talked about. So although Birotteau's stupidity was real and not feigned, people gave him credit for playing the fool on purpose.

A copy of the prospectus has been procured, not without difficulty, by the house of Popinot & Co., druggists in the Rue des Lombards. In a more elevated connection this curious piece of rhetoric would be styled an historical document, and valued for the light that it sheds on contemporary manners. Here, therefore, it is given:

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S

SUPERFINE PÂTE DES SULTANES

AND

CARMINATIVE TOILET LOTION.

A Marvelous Discovery!

Approved by the Institute.

"For some time past a preparation for the hands and a toilet lotion more efficacious than Eau-de-Cologne have been generally desired by both sexes throughout Europe. After devoting long nights to the study of the dermis and epidermis of both sexes—for both attach, and with reason, the greatest importance to the softness, suppleness, bloom, and delicate surface of the skin—M. Birotteau, a perfumer of high standing and well known in the capital and abroad, has invented two preparations, which from their first appearance have been deservedly called 'marvelous' by people of the highest fashion in Paris. Both preparations possess astonishing properties, and act upon the skin without bringing about premature wrinkles, the inevitable result of the rash use of the drugs hitherto compounded by ignorance and cupidity.

"These inventions are based upon the difference of temperaments, which are divided into two great classes, are indicated by the difference of color in the pâte and the lotion; the rose-colored preparations being intended for the dermis and epidermis of persons of lymphatic constitution, and the white for those endowed with a sanguine temperament.

"The pâte is called the Pâte des Sultanes, because the specific was in the first instance invented for the Seraglio by an Arab physician. It has been approved by the Institute on the report of our illustrious chemist Vauquelin, and the lotion, likewise approved, is compounded upon the same principles.

"The Pâte des Sultanes, an invaluable preparation, which exhales the sweetest fragrance, dissipates the most obstinate freckles, whitens the skin in the most stubborn cases, and represses the perspiration of the hand from which women suffer no less than men.

"The Carminative Toilet Lotion removes the slight pimples

which sometimes appear inopportunely on ladies' faces and contravene their projects for the ball; it refreshes and revives the color by opening or closing the pores of the skin in accordance with the exigencies of the temperament, while its efficacy in arresting the ravages of time is so well known already that many ladies, out of gratitude, call it the FRIEND OF BEAUTY.

"Eau-de-Cologne is purely and simply an ordinary perfume without special efficacy, while the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion are two active remedies, powerful agents, perfectly harmless in their operation of seconding the efforts of nature; their perfumes, essentially balsamic and exhilarating, admirably refresh the animal spirits, and charm and revive ideas. Their merits are as marvelous as their simplicity; in short, to woman they offer an added charm, while a means of attraction is put within the reach of man.

"The daily use of the Carminative Toilet Lotion allays the smarting sensation caused by shaving, while it keeps the lips red and smooth, and prevents chapping; it gradually dissipates freckles by natural means; and, finally, it restores tone to the complexion. These results are the signs of that perfect equilibrium of the humors of the body, which insures immunity from the migraine to those who are subject to that distressing complaint. In short, the Carminative Toilet Lotion, which may be used in all the operations of the toilet, is a preventive of cutaneous affections, by permitting free transpiration through the tissues, while imparting a permanent bloom to the skin.

"All communications should be prepaid and addressed to M. César Birotteau (late Ragon), Perfumer to her late majesty Queen Marie-Antoinette, at the Queen of Roses, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, Paris.

"*The price of the Pâte is three livres per tablet, and of the Toilet Lotion, six livres per bottle.*

"To prevent fraudulent imitations, M. Birotteau warns the public that the wrapper of every tablet bears his signature, and that his name is stamped on every bottle of the Toilet Lotion."

The success of this scheme was due, as a matter of fact (though César did not suspect it), to Constance, who proposed that they should send sample cases of the Carminative Toilet Lotion and the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes to every

perfumer in France or abroad, offering, at the same time, a discount of thirty per cent. as an inducement to take a gross of either article at a time?

The Pâte and the Lotion were really better than similar cosmetics, and the simple were attracted by that distinction made between the two temperaments. The discount was tempting to hundreds of perfumers all over France, and each would take annually three hundred gross or more of both preparations; and, if the profits on each article were small, the demand was great and the output enormous. César was able to buy the sheds and the plot of land in the Faubourg du Temple. He built a large factory there, and had the Queen of Roses magnificently decorated. The household began to feel the small comforts of an easier existence, and the wife quaked less than heretofore.

In 1810 Mme. César predicted a rise in house rents. At her instance her husband took the lease of the whole house above the store, and they removed from the mezzanine floor (where they had begun housekeeping together) to the second floor. A piece of luck which befell them about that time decided Constance to shut her eyes to Birotteau's follies in the matter of decorating a room for her. The perfumer was made a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce. It was his character for integrity and conscientiousness, together with the esteem in which he was held, that gained this dignity for him; thenceforward he must be considered as a notable among the tradesmen of Paris.

He used to rise at five o'clock in the morning to read handbooks on jurisprudence and works which treated of commercial law. With his instinct for fair dealing, his uprightness, his readiness to take trouble—all qualities essential for the appreciation of the knotty points submitted to arbitration—he was one of the most highly esteemed judges in the Tribunal. His faults contributed no less to his reputation. César was so conscious of his inferiority that he was ready

and willing to take his colleagues' opinion, and they were flattered by the attention with which he listened to them. Some of them thought a good deal of the silent approbation of such a listener, reputed to be a hard-headed man; others were delighted with his amiability and modesty, and extolled him on those grounds. Those amenable to his jurisdiction lauded his benevolence and conciliatory spirit, and he was often called in to act as arbitrator in disputes wherein his homely sense suggested to him a kind of Cadi's justice.

He managed to invent and use throughout his term of office a style of his own; it was stuffed with platitudes, interspersed with trite sayings, and pieces of reasoning rounded into phrases which came out without effort, and sounded like eloquence in the ears of shallow people. In this way he commended himself to the naturally mediocre majority, condemned to penal servitude for life and to views of the earth earthy.

César lost so much time at the Tribunal that his wife put pressure upon him, and thenceforward he declined the costly honor.

In the year 1813 this household, thanks to its constant unity, after plodding along through life in a humdrum fashion, entered upon an era of prosperity which nothing seemingly ought to check.

M. and Mme. Ragon (their predecessors), Uncle Pillerault, Roguin the notary, the Matifats (druggists in the Rue des Lombards who supplied the Queen of Roses), Joseph Lebas (a retail draper, a leading light in the Rue Saint-Denis, successor to Guillaume at the Cat and Racket), Judge Popinot (Mme. Ragon's brother), Chiffreville (of the firm of Protez & Chiffreville), M. Cochin (a clerk of the Treasury, and a sleeping partner in Matifat's business), his wife, Mme. Cochin, and the Abbé Loraux (confessor and director of the devout among this little circle) made up, with one or two others, the number of their acquaintance. César Birotteau might be a

Royalist, but public opinion at that time was in his favor; and, though he had scarcely a hundred thousand francs beside his business, was looked upon as a very wealthy man. His steady-going ways, his punctuality, his habit of paying ready money for everything, of never discounting bills, while he would take paper to oblige a customer of whom he was sure—all these things, together with his readiness to oblige, had brought him a great reputation. And not only so; he had really made a good deal of money, but the building of his factories had absorbed most of it, and he paid nearly twenty thousand francs a year in rent. The education of their only daughter, whom Constance and César both idolized, had been a heavy expense. Neither the husband nor the wife thought of money where Césarine's pleasure was concerned, and they had never brought themselves to part with her.

Imagine the delight of the poor peasant-parvenu when he heard his charming Césarine play a sonata by Steibelt or sing a ballad; when he saw her writing French correctly, or making sepia drawings of landscape, or listened while she read aloud from the Racines, father and son, and explained the beauties of the poetry. What happiness it was for him to live again in this fair, innocent flower, not yet plucked from the parent stem; this angel, over whose growing graces and earliest development they had watched with such passionate tenderness; this only child, incapable of despising her father or of laughing at his want of education, so much was she his little daughter.

When César came to Paris he had known how to read, write, and cipher, and at that point his education had been arrested. There had been no opportunity in his hard-working life of acquiring new ideas and information beyond the perfumery trade. He had spent his time among folk to whom science and literature were matters of indifference, and whose knowledge was of a limited and special kind; he himself, having no time to spare for loftier studies, became perforce a

practical man. He adopted (how should he have done otherwise?) the language, errors, and opinions of the Parisian tradesman who admires Molière, Voltaire, and Rousseau on hearsay, and buys their works, but never opens them; who will have it that the proper way to pronounce *armoire* is *ormoire: or* means gold and *moire* means silk, and women's dresses used almost always to be made of silk, and in their cupboards they locked up silk and gold—therefore, *ormoire* is right and *armoire* (closet) is an innovation. Talma, Mlle. Mars, and other actors and actresses were millionaires ten times over, and did not live like ordinary mortals: the great tragedian lived on raw meat, and Mlle. Mars would have a fricassee of pearls now and then—an idea she had taken from some celebrated Egyptian actress. As to the Emperor, his vest pockets were lined with leather, so that he could take a handful of snuff at a time; he used to ride at full gallop up the staircase of the orangery at Versailles. Authors and artists ended in the workhouse, the natural close to their eccentric careers; they were, every one of them, atheists into the bargain, so that you had to be very careful not to admit anybody of that sort into your house. Joseph Lebas used to advert with horror to the story of his sister-in-law Augustine who married the artist Sommervieux. Astronomers lived on spiders. These bright examples of the attitude of the bourgeois mind toward philology, the drama, politics, and science will throw light upon its breadth of view and powers of comprehension.

Let a poet pass along the Rue des Lombards, and some stray sweet scent shall set him dreaming of the east; for him, with the odor of the Khuskus grass, would come a vision of Nautch girls in an eastern bath. The brilliant red lac would call up thoughts of Vedic hymns, of alien creeds and castes; and at a chance contact with an ivory tusk, he would mount an elephant and make love, like the king of Lahore, in a muslin-curtained howdah.

But the petty tradesman does not so much as know whence

the raw materials of his business are brought. Of natural history or of chemistry, Birotteau the perfumer, for instance, knew nothing whatever. It is true that he regarded Vauquelin as a great man, but Vauquelin was an exception. César himself was about on a par with the retired grocer, who summed up a discussion on the ways of growing tea by announcing with a knowing air that "there are only two ways of obtaining tea—from Havre or by the overland route." And Birotteau thought that aloes and opium were only to be found in the Rue des Lombards. People told you that attar of roses came from Constantinople, but, like Eau-de-Cologne, it was made in Paris. These names of foreign places were humbug; they had been invented to amuse the French nation, who cannot abide anything that is made in France. A French merchant has to call his discovery an English invention, or people will not buy it; it is just the same in England, the druggists there tell you that things come from France.

Yet César was not altogether a fool or a dunce; an honest and kind heart shed a lustre over everything that he did and made his a worthy life, and a kindly deed absolves all possible forms of ignorance. His unvarying success gave him assurance; and, in Paris, assurance, the sign of power, is taken for power itself.

César's wife, who had learned to know her husband's character during the early years of their marriage, led a life of perpetual terror; she represented sound sense and foresight in the partnership; she was doubt, opposition, and fear; while César represented boldness, ambition, activity, the element of chance and undreamed-of good-luck. In spite of appearances, the merchant was the weaker vessel, and it was the wife who really had the patience and courage. So it had come to pass that a timid mediocrity, without education, knowledge, or strength of character, a being who could in nowise have succeeded in the world's slipperiest places, was taken for a remarkable man, a man of spirit and resolution, thanks

to his instinctive uprightness and sense of justice, to the goodness of a truly Christian soul, and love for the one woman who had been his.

The public only sees results. Of all César's circle, only Pillerault and Judge Popinot saw beneath the surface; none of the rest could pronounce on his character. Those twenty or thirty friends, moreover, who met at one another's houses, retailed the same platitudes, repeated the same stale commonplaces, and each one among them regarded himself as superior to his company. There was a rivalry among the women in dinners and dress; each one summed up her husband in some contemptuous word.

Mme. Birotteau alone had the good sense to show respect and deference to her husband in public. She saw in him the man who, in spite of his private weaknesses, had made the wealth and earned the esteem which she shared along with him; though she sometimes privately wondered if all men who were spoken of as superior intellects were like her husband. This attitude of hers contributed not a little to maintain the respect and esteem shown by others to the merchant, in a country where wives are quick-witted enough to belittle their husbands and to complain of them.

The first days of the year 1814, so fatal to Imperial France, were memorable in the Birotteau household for two events, which would have passed almost unnoticed anywhere else; but they were of a kind to leave a deep impression on simple souls like César and his wife, who, looking back upon their past, found no painful memories.

They had engaged a young man of two-and-twenty, Ferdinand du Tillet by name, as first assistant. The lad had come to them from another house in the perfumery trade, where they had declined to give him a percentage on the profits. He was thought to be a genius, and he had been very anxious to go to the Queen of Roses, knowing the place, and the people, and their ways. Birotteau had engaged him at a

salary of a thousand francs, meaning that du Tillet should be his successor. This Ferdinand du Tillet was destined to exercise so great an influence over the family fortunes that a few words must be said about him.

He had begun life simply on his Christian name of Ferdinand. There was an immense advantage in anonymity, he thought, at a time when Napoleon was pressing the young men of every family into the army; but if he had no name, he had been born somewhere, and owed his birth to some cruel or voluptuous fancy. Here, in brief, are the few facts known as to his name and designation.

In 1793 a poor girl of Tillet, a little hamlet near the Andelys, bore a child one night in the curé's garden at Tillet, tapped on the shutters, and then drowned herself. The good man received the child, named him after the saint of that day in the calendar, and reared him as if he had been his own son. In 1804 the curé died, and the little property that he left was insufficient to complete the education thus begun. Ferdinand, thrown upon Paris, there led the life of a freebooter, amid chances that might bring him to the scaffold or to fortune, to the bar, the army, commerce, or private life. Ferdinand, compelled to live like a very Figaro, first became a commercial traveler, then, after traveling round France and seeing life, became a perfumer's assistant, with a fixed determination to make his way at all costs. In 1813 he considered it expedient to ascertain his age and to acquire a status as a citizen; he, therefore, petitioned the Tribunal of the Andelys to transfer the entry of his baptism from the church records to the mayor's register; and, further, he asked that they should insert the surname of du Tillet, which he had assumed, on the ground of his exposure at birth in the commune of that name.

He had neither father nor mother; he had no guardian save the procureur-impérial; he was alone in the world, and owed no account of himself to any one; society was to him a harsh

stepdame, and he showed no mercy in his dealings with society, knew no guide but his own interests, found all means of success permissible. The Norman, armed with these dangerous capacities, combined with his desire to succeed the crabbed faults for which the natives of his province are, rightly or wrongly, blamed. Beneath his insinuating manner there was a contentious spirit ; he was a most formidable antagonist —a blustering litigant, disputing another's least rights audaciously, while he never yielded a point himself. He had time on his side, and wearied out his opponents by his inflexible pertinacity. His principal merits were those of the Scapins of old comedy ; he possessed their fertility of resource, their skill in sailing near the wind, their itch to seize on what seems good to have and hold. Indeed, he meant to apply to his poverty a motto which the Abbé Terray applied in statecraft ; he would make a clean record by turning honest at some time later on.

He was endowed with strenuous energy, with the military intrepidity which demands good deeds or bad indifferently of everybody, justifying his demand by the theory of personal interest ; he was bound to succeed ; he had too great a scorn of human nature ; he believed too firmly that all men have their price ; he was too little troubled by scruples as to the choice of means, when all were alike permissible ; his eyes were too fixedly set upon the success and wealth that should purchase absolution for a system of morals which worked thus not to be successful.

Such a man, between the convict's prison on the one hand and millions upon the other, must of necessity become vindictive, domineering, swift in his decisions, a dissembling Cromwell scheming to cut off the head of probity. A light, mocking wit concealed the depth of his character ; mere clerk though he was, his ambition knew no bounds ; he had comprehended society in one glance of hatred, and said to himself, "You are in my power." He had vowed that he would not

marry before he was forty years old. He kept his word with himself.

As to Ferdinand's outward appearance, he was a slim, well-shaped young fellow, with adaptable manners that enabled him at need to take any tone through the whole gamut of society. At first sight his weasel face was not displeasing; but, after more observation, you detected the strange expressions which are visible on the surface of those who are not at peace with themselves, or who hear at times the warning voice of conscience. His hard, high color glowed under the soft Norman skin. There was a furtive look in the wall-eyes, lined with silver leaf, which grew terrible when they were fixed full on his victim. His voice was husky, as if he had been speaking for long. The thin lips were not unpleasing, but the sharply-pointed nose and slightly-rounded forehead revealed a defect of race. Indeed, the coloring of his hair, which looked as if it had been dyed black, indicated the social half-breed, who had his cleverness from a dissolute great lord, his low ideas from the peasant girl, the victim of seduction; who owed his knowledge to an incomplete education; whose vices were those of the waif and stray.

Birotteau learned, to his unbounded amazement, that his assistant went out very elegantly arrayed, came in very late, and went to balls at bankers' and notaries' houses. These habits found no favor with César. To his way of thinking an assistant should study the ledgers and think of nothing but the business. The perfumer had no patience with folly. He spoke gently to du Tillet about wearing such fine linen, about visiting cards, which bore the name F. du Tillet—manners and customs which, according to his commercial jurisprudence, should be confined to the fashionable world.

But Ferdinand had established himself in this house to play Tartuffe to Birotteau's Orgon; he paid court to Mme. César, tried to seduce her, and, gauging his employer with appalling quickness, judged him as his wife had previously judged. Du

Tillet only said what he meant to say, and was both reserved and discreet; but he unveiled opinions of mankind and views of life in a fashion that dismayed a timorous, conscientious woman, who thought it a sin to do the slightest wrong to her neighbor. In spite of the tact which Mme. Birotteau employed, du Tillet felt her contempt for him; and Constance, to whom Ferdinand had written several amorous epistles, soon noticed a change in the manners of her assistant. He began to behave presumptuously, to give others the impression that there was an understanding between them. Without informing her husband of her private reasons, she recommended him to dismiss the man, and Birotteau was of his wife's opinion on this head. Du Tillet's dismissal was resolved upon; but one evening, on the Saturday before he gave notice, Birotteau balanced his books, as he was wont to do every month, and found that he was three thousand francs short. He was in terrible consternation. It was not so much the actual loss that affected him as the suspicion that hung over his three assistants and the servant, the errand boy, and the workmen. On whom was he to lay the blame? Mme. Birotteau was never away from the cash desk. The book-keeper, who lodged in the house, was a young man of eighteen, Popinot by name, a nephew of M. Ragon, and honesty itself. Indeed, on Popinot's own showing the money was missing, for the cash did not agree with the balance. Husband and wife agreed to say nothing, and to watch every one in the house.

Monday came, and their friends came to spend the evening. Every family in this set entertained in turn. While they played at cards, Roguin the notary put down on the table one old louis-d'or which Mme. César had taken some days before of a bride, Mme. d'Espart.

"Have you been robbing the poor-box?" asked the perfumer, laughing.

Roguin said that he had won the money of du Tillet at a banker's house on the previous evening, and du Tillet bore

him out in this without a blush. As for the perfumer, he turned crimson. When the visitors had gone, and Ferdinand was about to go to bed, Birotteau called him down into the shop, on pretense of business to discuss.

"We are three thousand francs short in the cash, du Tillet," the good man said, "and I cannot suspect anybody. The matter of the old louis-d'or seems to be too much against you to be passed over entirely, so we will not go to bed till we have found out the mistake, for, after all, it can be nothing but a mistake. Very likely you took the louis on account of your salary."

Du Tillet owned to having taken the louis. The perfumer thereupon opened the ledger; the assistant's account had not yet been debited with the sum.

"I was in a hurry. I ought to have asked Popinot to enter it," said Ferdinand.

"Quite true," said Birotteau, disconcerted by this off-hand coolness. The Norman had taken the measure of the good folk among whom he had come with a view to making his fortune.

The perfumer and his assistant spent the night in checking the books, the worthy merchant knowing all the while that it was trouble thrown away. As he came and went he slipped three bank-notes of a thousand francs each into the safe, pressing them between the side of the drawer and the groove in the safe; then he pretended to be tired out, seemed to be fast asleep, and snored. Du Tillet awakened him in triumph, and showed exaggerated delight over the discovery of the mistake.

The next morning Birotteau scolded little Popinot and Mme. César in public, and waxed wrathful over their carelessness.

A fortnight later, Ferdinand du Tillet entered a stock-broker's office. The perfumery trade did not suit him, he said; he wanted to study banking. At the same time, he

spoke of Mme. César in a way that gave the impression that motives of jealousy had procured his dismissal.

A few months later du Tillet came to see his late employer, and asked him to be his surety for twenty thousand francs, to complete the guarantees required in a matter which was to put him in the way of making his fortune. Seeing Birotteau's surprise at this piece of effrontery, du Tillet scowled and asked the perfumer whether he had no confidence in him. Matifat and two men with whom Birotteau did business were there at the time; his indignation did not escape them, though he controlled his anger in their presence. Perhaps du Tillet had returned to honesty; a gambling debt or some woman in distress might have been at the root of that error of his; and the fact that an honest man publicly declined to have anything to do with him might launch a man, still young, and perhaps penitent, on a career of crime and misfortune. The angel of mercy took up the pen and set his signature on du Tillet's papers, saying as he did so that he was heartily glad to do a small service for a lad who had been very useful to him. The color came into the good man's face as he told that kindly lie. Du Tillet could not meet his eyes, and doubtless at that moment vowed an eternal enmity, the truceless hate that the angels of darkness bear the angels of light.

Du Tillet kept his balance so skillfully upon the tight-rope of speculation that he was always fashionably dressed, and was apparently rich long before he was rich in reality. When he set up a cabriolet he never put it down again; he held his own in the lofty spheres where pleasure and business are mingled, among the Turcarets of the epoch for whom the crush-room of the opera is a branch of the Stock Exchange.

Thanks to Mme. Roguin, whom he had met among the Birotteaus' circle, he became rapidly known in high financial regions. Ferdinand du Tillet had attained a prosperity in nowise delusive; he was on an excellent footing with the firm

of Nucingen, to whom Roguin had introduced him; and he had not been slow to secure the Keller connection and to make friends among the upper banking world. Nobody knew where the young fellow found the vast capital which he could command, but they set down his luck to his intelligence and honesty.

The Restoration made a personage of César Birotteau, and, in the vortex of political crises, he not unnaturally forgot these two cross-events in his household. The tenacity with which he had held to his opinions—for though since his wound it had been a strictly passive tenacity, he still held to his principles for decency's sake—had brought him patronage in high quarters, precisely because he had asked for nothing. He received an appointment as major in the National Guard, though he did not so much as know a single word of command.

In 1815 Napoleon, inimical as ever to Birotteau, ejected him from his post. During the Hundred Days, Birotteau became the *bête noire* (wild boar; *i.e.*, butt) of the Liberals in his quarter; for party feeling began to run high in that year among the commercial class, who hitherto had been unanimous in voting for peace for business reasons.

After the second Restoration, the Royalist government found it necessary to manipulate the municipal body. The prefect wanted to transform Birotteau into a mayor, but, thanks to his wife, the perfumer accepted the less conspicuous position of deputy-mayor. His modesty added not a little to his reputation, and brought him the friendship of the mayor, M. Flamet de la Billardière. Birotteau, who had seen him in the Queen of Roses in the days when Royalist plotters used to meet at Ragon's store, suggested his name to the prefect of the Seine, who consulted the perfumer on the choice. M. and Mme. Birotteau were never forgotten in the mayor's invitations, and Mme. Birotteau often asked for charitable subscriptions at Saint-Roch in good society.

La Billardière warmly supported Birotteau when it was proposed to distribute the crosses awarded to the municipal body; when names were being weighed he laid stress upon César's wound received at Saint-Roch, on his attachment to the Bourbons, and on the respect in which Birotteau was held. So the minister who, while he endeavored to undo the work of Napoleon, was wishful to make creatures of his own, and, to secure partisans for the Bourbons from the ranks of commerce and among men of art and science, included Birotteau in the list of those to be distinguished.

This favor, together with the glory which César already shed around him in his arrondissement, put him in a position that was bound to magnify the ideas of a man who had met hitherto with nothing but success; and when the mayor told him of the approaching distinction, it was the final argument which urged the perfumer into the speculation which he had just disclosed to his wife; for it opened up a way of quitting the perfumery trade and of rising to the upper ranks of the Parisian bourgeoisie.

César was forty years old. Hard work at his factory had set one or two premature wrinkles in his face and slightly silvered the long, bushy hair, on which the constant pressure of his hat had impressed a glossy ring. The outlines of his hair described five points on the forehead, which told a story of simplicity of life. There was nothing alarming about the bushy eyebrows, for the blue eyes, with their clear, straightforward expression, were in keeping with the honest man's brow. His nose, broken at his birth and blunt at the tip, gave him the astonished look of the typical Parisian cockney. His lips were very thick, his chin heavy and straight. It was a high-colored face with square outlines, and a peculiar disposition of the wrinkles—altogether it was of the ingenuous, shrewd, peasant type; and his evident physical strength, his sturdy limbs, broad shoulders, and big feet, all denoted the countryman transported to Paris. The large hands, covered

with hair, the creases in the plump finger-joints, and broad, square-shaped nails at the tips, would alone have attested his origin if there had not been signs of it about his whole person.

He always wore the bland smile with which a storekeeper welcomes a customer; but this smile, assumed for business purposes in his case, was the outward and visible expression of inward content and reflected the serenity of a kindly soul. His distrust of his species was strictly confined to the business; he parted company with his shrewdness as he came away from the Exchange or shut his ledger. Suspicion for him was one of the exigencies of business, like his printed bill-heads.

There was a comical mixture of assurance, fatuity, and good-nature in his face, which gave it a certain character of its own, and redeemed it, to some extent, from the vapid uniformity of Parisian bourgeois countenances. But for that expression of artless wonder and trustfulness, people would have stood too much in awe of him; it was thus that he paid his quota of absurdity that put him on a footing of equality with his kind.

It was a habit of his to cross his hands behind him while speaking; and, when he meant to say something particularly civil or striking, he gradually raised himself on tiptoe once or twice, and came down heavily upon his heels, as if to emphasize his remark. Sometimes in the height of a discussion he would suddenly swing himself round, take a step or two as if in search of objections, and then turn abruptly upon his opponent. He never interrupted anybody, and not seldom fell a victim to his finer punctilious observance of good manners, for others did not scruple to take the words out of his mouth, and when the worthy man came away he had been unable to put in a word.

In his wide experience of business he had acquired habits which others sometimes described as a mania. For instance, if a bill had not been met, he would put it in the hands of the

process-server and gave himself no further trouble about it, save to receive the capital, interest, and court expenses. The matter might drive the customer into bankruptcy, and then César went no further. He never attended a meeting of creditors; his name never appeared in any list; he kept his claims. This system, together with an implacable contempt for bankrupts, had been handed down to him by old M. Ragon, who, after a long commercial experience, had come to the conclusion that the meagre and uncertain dividend paid under the circumstances was a very poor return for the time wasted in law proceedings, and held that he could spend his time to better purpose than in running about after excuses for dishonesty.

"If the bankrupt is an honest man and makes his way again, he will pay you," M. Ragon was wont to say. "If he has nothing, and is simply unfortunate, what is the good of tormenting him? And if he is a rogue, you will get nothing in any case. If you have a name for being hard on people, they will not try to make terms with you; and so long as they can pay at all, you are the man whom they will pay."

César kept his appointments punctually; he would wait for ten minutes, and nothing would induce him to stay any longer, a characteristic which was a cause of punctuality in others who had to do with him.

His dress was in keeping with his appearance and habits. No power on earth would have induced him to resign the white lawn neck-cloths with drooping ends, embroidered by his wife or daughter. His white drill vests, adorned with a double row of buttons, descended low upon his prominent abdomen, for Birotteau was inclined to corpulence. He wore blue breeches, black silk stockings, and walking-shoes adorned with ribbon bows that were apt to come unfastened. Out of doors his too ample green overcoat and broad-brimmed hat gave him a somewhat Quakerly appearance. On Sunday evenings he wore a coat of chestnut-brown cloth, with long tails and ample

skirts, and black silk breeches; the corners of the inevitable vest were turned down a little to display the pleated shirt-front beneath, and there were gold buckles on his shoes. Until the year 1819 his person was further adorned by two parallel lines of watch-chain, but he only wore the second when in full dress.

Such was César Birotteau—a worthy soul, from whom the mysterious powers that preside at the making of man had withheld the faculty of seeing life or politics as a whole, and the capacity of rising above the social level of the lower middle class; in all things he was destined to follow in the ruts of the old road; he had caught his opinions like an infection, and he put them in practice without examining into them. But if he was blind, he was a good man; if he was not very clever, he was deeply religious, and his heart was pure. In that heart there shone but one love, the light of his life and its motive-power; for his desire to rise in the world, like the meagre knowledge that he had learned in it, had its source in his love for his wife and daughter.

As for Mme. César, at that time, at the age of thirty-seven, she so exactly resembled the Venus of Milo that, when the Duc de Rivière sent the beautiful statue to France, all her acquaintance recognized the likeness. A few short months, and trouble so swiftly spread its sallow tinge over the dazzling fairness of her face, so ruthlessly darkened and hollowed the blue-veined circles in which the beautiful hazel eyes were set, that she came to look like an aged Madonna; for in the wreck of her beauty she never lost her sweet ingenuousness, though there was a sad expression in the clear eyes; and it was impossible not to see in her a still beautiful woman, staid in her demeanor and full of dignity. Moreover, during this ball of César's planning, her beauty was to shine forth radiantly and exquisitely adorned for the last time to the admiration of beholders.

Every life has its apogee; there is a time in every existence

when active causes bring about exactly proportionate results. This high-noon of life, when the vital forces are evenly balanced and put forth in all the glory of their strength, is common not only to organic life; you will find it even in the history of cities and nations and institutions and ideas, in commerce, and in every kind of human effort, for, like noble families and dynasties, these too have their birth and rise and fall.

How comes it that this argument of waxing and waning is applied so inexorably to everything throughout the system of things?—to death as to life; for in times of pestilence death runs his course—abates, returns again, lies dormant. Who knows but that our globe itself is a rocket somewhat longer lived than other fireworks?

History, telling over and over again the reasons of the rise and fall of all that has been in the world in the past, might be a warning to man that there is a moment when the active play of all his faculties must cease; but neither conquerors, nor actors, nor women, nor writers heed the wholesome admonition. César Birotteau, who should have looked upon himself as having reached the apogee of his career, mistook the summit for the starting-point. He did not know the reason of the downfalls of which history is full; nay, neither kings nor peoples have made any effort to engrave in imperishable characters the causes of the catastrophes of which the history of royal and of commercial houses affords such conspicuous examples. Why should not pyramids be reared anew to put us constantly in mind of the immutable law which should govern the affairs of nations as well as of individuals: *When the effect produced is no longer in direct relation with nor in exact proportion to the cause, disorganization sets in?* And yet —these monuments are all about us—in legends, in the stones that cry out to us of a past, and bear perpetual record to the freaks of a stubborn Fate whose hand sweeps away our illusions, and makes it clear to us that the greatest events resolve

themselves at last into an Idea, and the "Tale of Troy" and the "Story of Napoleon" are poems and nothing more.

Would that this story might be the Epic of the Bourgeoisie; there are dealings of fate with man which inspire no voice, because they lack grandeur, yet are even for that very reason immense: for this is not the story of an isolated soul, but of a whole nation of sorrows.

César as he dropped off to sleep feared that his wife might bring forward some peremptory objection in the morning, and laid it upon himself to wake betimes and settle everything. As soon as it grew light, he rose noiselessly, leaving his wife asleep, dressed quickly, and went down into the shop just as the boy was taking down the numbered shutters. Birotteau, finding himself in solitary possession, stood waiting in the doorway for the assistants, watching critically meanwhile the way in which Raguet the errand boy discharged his duties, for Birotteau was an old hand. The weather was magnificent in spite of the cold.

"Popinot, fetch your hat and your walking shoes, and tell Monsieur Célestin to come down; you and I will go to the Tuileries and have a little talk together," said he, when Anselme came.

Popinot, that admirable foil to du Tillet, whom one of those happy chances which induce a belief in a protecting providence had established in César's houshold, will play so great a part in this story that it is necessary to give a sketch of him here.

Mme. Ragon's maiden name was Popinot. She had two brothers. One of them, the youngest of the family, was at the present time a judge in the Tribunal of First Instance of the Seine. The elder had gone into the wool-trade, had lost his patrimony, and died, leaving his only son to the Ragons and his brother the judge, who had no children. The child's mother had died at his birth.

Mme. Ragon had found this situation for her nephew, and

hoped to see him succeed to Birotteau. Anselme Popinot (for that was his name) was short and club-footed, a dispensation common to Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Talleyrand, lest others thus afflicted should be too much discouraged. He had the brilliant complexion covered with freckles which usually distinguishes red-haired people; but a clear forehead, eyes like agates streaked with gray, a pretty mouth, a pale face, the charm of youthful diffidence, and a want of confidence in himself, due to his physical deformity, aroused a kindly feeling toward him in others. We love the weak, and people felt interested in Popinot.

Little Popinot, as everybody called him, took after his family. They were people essentially religious, whose virtues were informed by intelligence, whose quiet lives were full of good deeds. So the child, brought up by his uncle the judge, united all the qualities pleasing in youth; he was a good and affectionate boy, a little bashful, but full of enthusiasm; docile as a lamb, but hard-working, faithful, and steady; endowed with all the virtues of a Christian in the early days of the church.

When Popinot heard of the proposed walk to the Tuileries, the most unlooked-for remark that his awe-inspiring employer could have made at that time of day, his thoughts went to his own settlement in life, and thence all at once to Césarine, the real queen of roses, the living sign of the house. He had fallen in love on his very first day in the shop, two months before du Tillet's departure. He was obliged to stop more than once on his way upstairs, his heart so swelled and his pulses beat so hard.

In another moment he came down, followed by Célestin, the first assistant. Then Anselme and his employer set out without a word for the Tuileries.

Anselme Popinot was just twenty-one years of age; Birotteau had married at one-and-twenty, so Anselme saw no hindrance to his marriage with Césarine on that score. It was her beauty

and her father's wealth that set enormous obstacles in the way of such ambitious wishes as his, but love grows with every up-leaping of hope; the wilder the hopes, the more he clung to them, and his longings grew the stronger for the distance between him and his love. Happy boy, who in a time when all and sundry are brought down to the same level, when every head is crowned with a precisely similar hat, can still contrive to create a distance between a perfumer's daughter and himself—the scion of an old Parisian family! And he was happy, in spite of his doubts and fears: every day of his life he sat next to Césarine at dinner; he set about his business with a zeal and enthusiasm that left no element of drudgery in his work; he did everything in the name of Césarine, and never wearied. At one-and-twenty devotion is food sufficient for love.

"He will be a merchant some of these days; he will get on," César would say, speaking of Anselme to Mme. Ragon, and he would praise Anselme's activity in the filling-out department, extolling his quickness at comprehending the mysteries of the craft, relating how that, when goods were to be sent off in a hurry, Anselme would roll up his sleeves and work bare-armed at packing the cases and nailing down the lids, and the lame lad would do more than all the rest of them put together.

There was another serious obstacle in the way of the orphan's success. It was a well-known and recognized fact that Alexandre Crottat, Roguin's head clerk, the son of a rich farmer of la Brie, hoped to marry Césarine; and there were other difficulties yet more formidable. In the depths of Popinot's heart there lay buried sad secrets which set a yet wider gulf between him and Césarine. The Ragons, on whom he might have counted, were in difficulties; the orphan boy was happy to take them his scanty salary to help them to eke out a living. But, in spite of all these things, he hoped to succeed! More than once he had caught a glance from Césarine,

and beneath her apparent pride he had dared to read a secret thought full of tender hopes in the depths of her blue eyes. So he worked on, set in a ferment by that gleam of hope, tremulous and mute, like all young men in a like case when life is breaking into blossom.

"Popinot," the good man began, "is your aunt quite well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Somehow she has seemed to me to have an anxious look for some time past; can something have gone askew with them? Look here, my boy, you must not make a stranger of me, that am almost like one of the family, for I have known your Uncle Ragon these five-and-twenty years. When I first came to him I was fresh from the country and wore a pair of hob-nailed boots. They call the place the Treasury Farm, but all I brought away with me was one gold louis which my god-mother gave me, Madame the late Marquise d'Uxelles, who was related to le Duc and la Duchesse de Lenoncourt, who are among our patrons. So I always say a prayer every Sunday for her and all the family; and her niece, Madame de Mortsauf, in Touraine, has all her perfumery from us. Customers are always coming to me through them. There is Monsieur de Vandenesse, for example, who spends twelve hundred francs with us every year. One ought to be grateful from prudence, if one is not grateful by nature; but I am a well-wisher to you, without an after-thought and for your own sake."

"Ah, sir, if you will allow me to say so, you had a level head."

"No, my boy, no; that won't do everything. I don't say that my headpiece isn't as good as another's, but I stuck to honesty through thick and thin; I was steady, and I never loved any one but my wife. Love is a fine *vehicle*, a neat expression of Monsieur de Villèle's yesterday at the Tribune."

"Love!" cried Popinot. "Oh! sir, do you——?"

"Stop a bit, stop a bit! There is old Roguin coming along the further side of the Place Louis XV. at eight o'clock in the morning. What can the old boy be about?" said César to himself, and he forgot Anselme Popinot and the hazelnut oil.

His wife's theories came up in his memory, and, instead of turning into the garden of the Tuileries, he walked on to meet the notary. Anselme followed at a distance, quite at a loss to explain the sudden interest which Birotteau appeared to take in a matter so unimportant; but very happy in the encouragement which he derived from his employer's little speech about hobnailed boots and louis-d'or, and love.

Roguin, a tall, burly man, with a pimpled face, an almost bald forehead, and black hair, had not formerly been lacking in comeliness; and he had been young and ambitious once, too, and from a mere clerk had come to be a notary; but now a keen observer would have read in his face the exhaustion and fatigue of a jaded seeker after pleasure. When a man plunges into the mire of excess, his face hardly escapes without a splash, and the lines engraved on Roguin's countenance and its florid color were alike ignoble. Instead of the pure glow which suffuses the tissues of men of temperate life and imparts a bloom of health, there was visible in Roguin the tainted blood inflamed by a strain against which the body rebelled. His nose was meanly turned up at the end, as is apt to be the case with those in whom humors taking this channel induce an internal affection, which a virtuous Queen of France innocently believed to be a misfortune common to the species, never having approached any man but the King sufficiently close to discover her mistake. Roguin's efforts to disguise his infirmity by taking quantities of Spanish snuff served rather to aggravate the troublesome symptoms, which had been the principal cause of his misfortunes.

Is it not carrying flattery of society somewhat too far to paint individuals always in false colors, to conceal in certain

cases the real causes of their vicissitudes, so often brought about by disease? Physical ills, in their moral aspects and the influences that they bring to bear on the mechanism of life, have perhaps been too much neglected hitherto by the historian of manners. Mme. César had rightly guessed the secret of Roguin's married life.

His wife, a charming girl, the only daughter of Chevrel, the banker, felt an unconquerable repugnance for the poor notary, which dated from the night of her marriage, and had been determined to demand an immediate divorce. But Roguin, too happy to have a wife who brought him five hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of her expectations, had implored her not to enter her plea, leaving her her liberty, and accepting all the consequences of such a compact. Mme. Roguin, mistress of the situation, treated her husband as a courtesan treats an elderly adorer. Roguin soon found his wife too dear, and, like many another Parisian, had a second establishment in the town. At first the expenditure did not exceed a moderate limit.

For a while Roguin found, at no great outlay, grisettes who were too glad of his protection; but at the end of three years he fell a prey to a violent sexagenarian passion for one of the most magnificent creatures of the time, known as the Beautiful Dutchwoman in the calendars of the *demi-monde*, for she shortly afterward fell back into that gulf, which her death made illustrious. One of Roguin's clients had formerly brought her to Paris from Bruges; and when, in 1815, political considerations forced him to fly he made her over to the notary. Roguin had taken a little house in the Champs-Élysées for his enchantress; he had furnished it handsomely, and had allowed himself to be led by her, until he had squandered away his fortune to satisfy her extravagant whims.

The gloomy expression, which vanished from Roguin's countenance at the sight of his client, was connected with mysterious events, wherein laid the secret of du Tillet's rapid

success. While du Tillet was still under Birotteau's roof, on the first Sunday which gave him an opportunity of observing how M. and Mme. Roguin were situated with regard to each other, his plans had undergone a change. His designs upon Mme. César had been subordinated to another purpose; he had meant to compel an offer of Césarine's hand as compensation for repulsed advances; but it cost him the less to give up this marriage since he had discovered that César was not rich, as he had believed. Then du Tillet played the spy on the notary, insinuated himself into his confidence, obtained an introduction to the Beautiful Dutchwoman, ascertained the terms on which she stood with Roguin, and learned that she was threatening to dismiss her adorer if he curtailed her extravagance. The Beautiful Dutchwoman was one of those scatterbrained creatures who take money without disturbing themselves as to how it was made or how they come by it; women who would give a banquet with a parricide's dollars. She took no thought for the morrow and was careless of yesterday. The future for her meant after dinner, and eternity lay between the present moment and the end of the month, even when she had bills to fall due. Du Tillet was delighted to find a first lever to his hand, and began his campaign by obtaining a reduction from the Beautiful Dutchwoman, who agreed to solace Roguin's existence for thirty thousand francs instead of fifty thousand, a kind of service which sexagenarian passion rarely forgets.

At length, one night after deep potations, Roguin opened out his financial position to du Tillet in an after-supper confidence. His real estate was mortgaged to its full value under his wife's marriage settlement, and in his infatuation he had appropriated moneys deposited with him by his clients; more than half the value of his practice had been embezzled in this way. When he had run through the rest, the unfortunate Roguin would blow his brains out, for he thought he should diminish the scandal of his failure by exciting the pity of

the public. Du Tillet, listening, beheld success, rapid and assured, gleaming like a flash of lightning through the obscurity of drunkenness. He reassured Roguin, and repaid his confidence by persuading him to fire his pistols into the air.

"When a man of your calibre takes such risks upon himself," said he, "he ought not to flounder about like a fool; he should set to work boldly."

Du Tillet counseled Roguin to help himself to a large sum of money, and to intrust it to him (du Tillet) to speculate boldly with it on the Stock Exchange, or in some other enterprise among the hundreds that were being started at that speculative epoch. If the stroke was successful, the two of them should found a bank, speculate with the deposits, and with the profits the notary should satisfy his cravings. If the luck went against them, Roguin should go abroad, instead of killing himself, for his devoted du Tillet would be faithful to the last penny. It was a rope flung out to a drowning man, and Roguin did not see that the perfumer's salesman was fastening it around his neck.

Du Tillet, master of Roguin's secret, used it to establish his power over the wife, the husband, and the mistress. Mme. Roguin, to whom he gave warning of a disaster, which she was far from suspecting, accepted du Tillet's assiduities, and then it was that the latter left the perfumer's shop, feeling that his future was secure. It was not difficult to persuade the mistress to risk a sum of money that in case of need she might not be obliged to go on the street. The wife looked into her affairs, and accumulated a small amount of capital, which she handed over to the man in whom her husband placed confidence, for at the outset the notary put a hundred thousand francs into the hands of his accomplice. Brought in this way into close contact with Mme. Roguin, du Tillet contrived to transform interest into affection and to inspire a violent passion in that handsome woman. In his speculations

on the Stock Exchange he naturally shared in the profits of his three associates, but this was not enough for him; he had the audacity to come to an understanding with an opponent, who refunded to him the amount of fictitious losses, for he played for his own hand as well as for his clients.

As soon as he had fifty thousand francs, he was sure of making a large fortune. He watched with the eagle's eye, that was one of his characteristics, over the phases of political life in France; he speculated for a fall in the funds during the campaign of France, and for a rise when the Bourbons came back.

Two months after the return of Louis XVIII., Mme. Roguin possessed two hundred thousand francs and du Tillet a hundred thousand crowns. In the notary's eyes this young man was an angel; he had restored order in his affairs. But the Beautiful Dutchwoman fell a victim to a wasting complaint which nothing could cure, a virulent cancer called Maxime de Trailles, one of the late Emperor's pages. Du Tillet discovered the woman's real name from her signature to a document. It was Sarah Gobseck. Then he remembered that he had heard of a money-lender of the name of Gobseck; and, struck by the coincidence, paid a visit to that aged discounter of bills and providence of young men with prospects, to find out how this female relative's credit stood with him. The bill-broking Brutus proved inexorable where his grandniece was concerned, but du Tillet himself managed to find favor in his eyes by posing as Sarah's banker with capital to invest. The Norman and the money-lender found each other congenial.

Gobseck wanted a clever young fellow who could look after a bit of business abroad for him just then. The return of the Bourbons had taken a State auditor by surprise. To this financier, wishful to stand well at Court, it had occurred that he might buy up the debts contracted by the Princes in Germany during the emigration. He offered the profits of the

affair, which for him was purely a matter of policy, to any one who would advance the necessary money. Old Gobseck had no mind to disburse moneys over and above the market value of the debts, into which a shrewd representative must first examine. Money-lenders trust nobody; they must always have a guarantee; the occasion is omnipotent with them; they are ice when they have no need of a man, affable and obliging when he is likely to be useful. Du Tillet knew the immense part played, below the surface, in the Paris money market by Werbrust and Gigonnet, discount brokers of the Rue Saint-Denis and Rue Saint-Martin, and by Palma, a banker in the Faubourg Poissonnière, who was almost always associated with Gobseck. He therefore offered to pay down caution money, requiring on his own side a share in the profits of the transaction, and asking that these gentlemen should employ in the money-lending business the capital which he should deposit with them. In this way he secured supporters. Then he accompanied M. Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx on a trip to Germany during the Hundred Days, and came back with the Second Restoration, with some added knowledge that should lead to success rather than with actual wealth. He had had an initiation into the secrets of one of the cleverest schemers in Paris; he had won the good-will of the man whom he had been set to watch; a dexterous juggler had laid bare for him the springs of political intrigue and the rules of the game.

Du Tillet's intelligence was of the order which understands at half a word; this journey formed him. On his return he found Mme. Roguin still faithful; but the poor notary was expecting Ferdinand with quite as much impatience as his wife. The Beautiful Dutchwoman had ruined him again!

Du Tillet, questioning the Beautiful Dutchwoman, could not elicit from her an account that represented all the money which she had squandered. And then it was that he discovered the secret so carefully kept from him—Sarah Gob-

seck's infatuation for Maxime de Trailles, known at the very outset of his career of vice and debauchery for a political hanger-on of a kind indispensable to all good government, and for an insatiable gambler. After this discovery du Tillet understood old Gobseck's indifference to his grandniece.

At this critical juncture du Tillet the banker (for by this time he was a banker) strongly recommended Roguin to put by something for a rainy day; to engage some of his richest clients in a business speculation, and then to keep back considerable sums out of the money paid over to him, in case he should be compelled to become a bankrupt in the course of a second career of speculation. After various rises and falls in the price of stocks, which brought luck only to du Tillet and Mme. Roguin, the notary's hour struck. He was insolvent, and thereupon, in his extremity, his closest friend exploited him, and du Tillet discovered that speculation in building land in the neighborhood of the Madeleine. Naturally one hundred thousand francs which Birotteau had deposited with Roguin until an investment should be found for them were paid over to du Tillet, who, bent upon compassing the perfumer's ruin, made Roguin understand that he ran less risk by ensnaring his own intimate friends in his toils.

"A friend," said du Tillet, "will not go all lengths even in anger."

There are not many people at this present day who know how little land was worth per foot in the district of the Madeleine at this time; but the building lots must necessarily shortly be sold for more than their momentary depreciation, caused by the necessity of finding purchasers who would profit by the opportunity. Now it was du Tillet's idea to reap the benefit without keeping his money locked up in a lengthy speculation. In other words, he meant to kill the affair, so that a corpse which he knew how to resuscitate might be knocked down to him.

In such emergencies as this, the Gobsecks, Palmas, Wer-

brusts, and Gigonnets all lent each other a hand, but du Tillet did not know them well enough to ask them to help him; and, beside, he meant to hide his action in the matter so thoroughly that, while he steered the whole business, he might receive all the profits and none of the disgrace of the robbery. So he saw the necessity of one of those animated lay figures termed "men of straw" in commercial phrase. The man who had once before acted the part of a stock-jobber for him seemed to be a suitable tool to his hand, and he infringed the divine rights by creating a man. Of a former commercial traveler, without a centime on this earth, with no ability, no capacity save for empty rambling talk on all sorts of subjects, and but just sufficient wit to suffer himself to be drilled in a part and to play it without compromising the piece, and yet endowed with the rarest sense of honor—that is to say, a faculty for silently accepting the dishonor of his principal—of him, du Tillet made a banker, the originator and promoter of commercial enterprises on the largest scale; him he metamorphosed into the head of the firm of Claparon.

Should the exigencies of du Tillet's affairs at any time demand a bankruptcy, it was to be Charles Claparon's fate to be delivered over to Jews and Pharisees, and Claparon knew it. Still, for the present, the scraps and pickings that fell to his share were an El Dorado for a poor devil who, when his chum du Tillet came across him, was sauntering along the boulevards with no prospects beyond the two-franc piece in his pockets; so his friendship for and devotion to du Tillet, swelled by a gratitude that did not look to the future and stimulated by the cravings of a dissolute and disreputable life, led him to say Amen to everything.

When he had once sold his honor he saw that it was risked with so much prudence that at length he came to have a sort of dog-like attachment for his old comrade du Tillet. Claparon was a very ugly performing poodle, but he was ready at any moment to make the leap of Curtius for his master.

In the present scheme Claparon was to represent one-half of the purchasers of the lots, as Birotteau represented the other half. Then the bills which Claparon would receive from Birotteau should be discounted by some money-lender, whose name du Tillet would borrow; so that, when Roguin absconded with the rest of the purchase-money, Birotteau would be left on the brink of ruin. Du Tillet meant to direct the action of the assignees; there should be a forced sale of the building land, and du Tillet meant to be the purchaser; he would buy it for about half its value, and pay for it with Roguin's money and the dividend of the bankruptcy; so under different names he was in possession of the money paid down by the perfumer and his creditor to boot.

It was a prospect of a goodly share of the spoils that led Roguin to meddle in this scheme; but he had practically surrendered himself at discretion to a man who could and did take the lion's part. It was impossible to bring du Tillet into a court of law, and the notary in a remote part of Switzerland, where he found beauties of a less expensive kind, was lucky to have a bone flung to him once a month or so.

The ugly scheme was no deliberate invention, no outcome of the broodings of a tragedian weaving a plot, but the result of circumstance. Hatred, unaccompanied by a desire for revenge, is as seed sown upon the granite rock: du Tillet swore to be revenged upon César Birotteau, and the prompting was one of the most natural things in the world; if it had been otherwise, there had been no quarrel between angels of darkness and the angels of light.

Du Tillet could not, without great inconvenience, murder the one man in Paris who knew that he had been guilty of petty theft; but he could sully his old master's name and crush him until his testimony was no longer admissible. For a long time past the thought of vengeance had been germinating in his mind; but it had come to nothing. The rush of life in Paris is so swift and so full of stir, chance counts

for so much in it, that even the most energetic haters do not look very far ahead; yet, on the other hand, if the constant ebb and flow is unfavorable to premeditated action, it affords excellent opportunities for carrying out projects that lurk in politic brains, clever enough to lie in wait for the chances that come with the tide. Du Tillet had had a dim inkling of the possibility of ruining César from the moment when Roguin first opened out his case to him; and he had not miscalculated.

Roguin, meanwhile, on the very point of leaving his idol, drained the rest of the philtre from the broken cup, going daily to the Champs-Élysées and returning home in the small hours. There were good grounds, therefore, for Madame César's suspicious theories. When a man has made up his mind to play such a part as du Tillet had assigned to Roguin, he perforce acquires the talents of a great actor; he has the eyes of a lynx and the penetration of a seer; he finds ways of magnetizing his dupe; so the notary had seen Birotteau long before Birotteau set eyes on him; and when he saw that he was recognized, he held out a hand while he was still at some distance.

"I have just been making the will of a great person who has not a week to live," said he, with the most natural air in the world, "but they have treated me like a village doctor—sent their carriage to fetch me and let me go home from thence afoot."

A slight cloud of suspicion which had darkened the perfumer's brows cleared away at these words; but Roguin had noticed it and took good care not to be the first to speak about the building land, for he meant to give his victim the finishing stroke.

"After a will come marriage-contracts," said Birotteau; "such is life. Ah! by-the-by, Roguin, old fellow, when do we make a match of it with the Madeleine, eh?" and he tapped the other on the chest. Among men, the best-con-

ducted bourgeois will try to appear a bit of a rogue with the women.

"Well, it is to-day or never," returned the notary with a diplomatic look. "We are afraid that the affair will get noised abroad; already two of my richest clients want to go into the speculation, and are very keen about it. So you can take it or leave it. After twelve o'clock this morning I shall draw up the deeds, and till one o'clock it is open to you to join us if you choose. Good-by. Xandrot made a rough draft of the documents for me last night, and I am about to read them through this very minute."

"All right, the thing is settled, you have my word," cried Birotteau, hurrying after the notary, and striking hands upon it. "Take the hundred thousand francs that were to have been my daughter's portion."

"Good," said Roguin, as he walked away.

In the brief interval as Birotteau returned to young Popinot he felt a sensation of feverish heat run through him, his diaphragm contracted, sounds rang in his ears.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked the assistant, looking at his employer's pale face.

"Ah, my boy, I have just concluded a big piece of business with a single word. No one in such a position can help feeling some emotion. You know all about it, however; and, beside, I brought you here so that we could talk comfortably where no one will listen to us. Your aunt is pinched; what did she lose her money in? Tell me about it."

"My uncle and aunt put their capital into Nucingen's bank, and were obliged to take over shares in the Worstchin mines in settlement of their claims; no dividends have been paid on them as yet, and at their time of life it is difficult to live on hope."

"Then how do they live?"

"They have been so good as to accept my salary."

"Good, Anselme, good," said the perfumer, looking up

with a tear in his eyes; "you are worthy of the attachment I feel for you. And you shall be well rewarded for your application in my service."

As he spoke, the merchant grew greater in his own estimation as well as in Popinot's eyes; a sense of his adventitious superiority was artlessly revealed in his homely and paternal way of speaking.

"What! Can you have guessed my passion for——?"

"For whom?" asked the perfumer.

"For Mademoiselle Césarine."

"Boy!" cried Birotteau, "you are very bold. But keep your secret carefully; I promise to forget it, and you shall go out of the house to-morrow. I don't blame you; the devil, no! In your place I should have done just the same. She is so pretty."

"Ah, sir!" cried the assistant, in such a perspiration that his shirt felt damp.

"This cannot be settled in a day, my boy. Césarine is her own mistress, and her mother has her ideas. So keep yourself to yourself, wipe your eyes, hold your heart well in hand, and we will say no more about it. I should not blush to have you for a son-in-law. As the nephew of Monsieur Popinot, judge of a Tribunal of First Instance, and as the Ragons' nephew, you have as good a right to make your way as another, but there are *ifs* and *buts* and *ands!* What a devil of a notion you have sprung upon me in the middle of a talk about business! There, sit you down on that bench, and business first and love affairs after. Now, Popinot, is there mettle in you?" said Birotteau, looking at his assistant. "Do you feel that you have courage enough to wrestle with those that are much stronger than you? for a hand-to-hand fight, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"To keep up a long and dangerous combat——?"

"What is it?"

"To drive Macassar Oil from the field!" cried Birotteau, drawing himself up like one of Plutarch's heroes. "We must not undervalue the enemy; he is strong, well intrenched, and formidable. Macassar Oil has been well pushed. It is a clever idea, and the shape of the bottles is out of the common. I had thoughts of a triangular bottle for this plan of mine, but, after mature reflection, I am inclined for little blown glass flasks covered with wicker work; they would look mysterious, and the public like anything that tickles their curiosity."

"It would cost a good deal," said Popinot. "Everything ought to be on the cheapest possible footing, so as to allow a heavy discount to the trade."

"Right, my boy; those are sound principles of business. Bear in mind that Macassar Oil will show fight! 'Tis a specious thing; the name is attractive. It is put before the public as a foreign importation, and we, unluckily, are in our own country. Look here, Popinot, do you feel strong enough to do for Macassar? To begin with, you will oust it from the export trade; it seems that Macassar really does come from the Indies, so it is more natural to send French goods to the Indians than to ship them back the stuff that they are supposed to send to us. So there's the export trade for you! But it will have to be fought out abroad, and all over the country; and Macassar Oil has been so well advertised that it is no use blinking the fact that it has a hold; it is pushed everywhere, and the public is familiar with it."

"I will do for it!" cried Popinot, with eyes on fire.

"And how?" returned Birotteau. "It is like the impetuosity of these young people! Just hear me out."

Anselme looked like a soldier presenting arms to a marshal of France.

"I have invented an oil, Popinot, an oil which invigorates the scalp, stimulates the growth of the hair, and preserves its color—an oil for both sexes. The essence should have no

less success than the Pâte and the Lotion, but I do not want to exploit the secret by myself; I am thinking of retiring from business. I want *you*, my boy, to bring out the Comagen—from the Latin word *coma*, which means hair (so Monsieur Alibert, physician to the King, told me). In 'Bérénice,' Racine's tragedy, too, there is a king of Comagène, a lover of the beautiful queen who was so famous for her hair; no doubt it was out of compliment to her that he called his kingdom Comagène. How clever these great men of genius are! they descend to the smallest details."

Little Popinot listened to these incongruities, evidently meant for his benefit, who had had some education, and yet kept his countenance.

"Anselme," continued Birotteau, "I have cast my eyes on you as the founder of a wholesale druggist's business in the Rue des Lombards. I will be a sleeping-partner, and find you the capital to start it with. When we have begun with the Comagen, we will try essence of vanilla and essence of peppermint. In short, by degrees we will go into the drug trade and revolutionize it, by selling articles in a concentrated form instead of the raw products. Are you satisfied, ambitious young man?"

Anselme was so overcome that he could not reply, but his tear-filled eyes made answer for him. It seemed to him that this offer was the outcome of a fatherly indulgence which took this means of saying, "Deserve Césarine by earning wealth and respect."

"I, too, will succeed, sir," he said at last, taking Birotteau's emotion for astonishment.

"Just what I was at your age," cried the perfumer; "those were just the very words I used! Whether you have my daughter or not, at any rate you will have a fortune. Well, my boy, what has come to you?"

"Let me hope that by gaining the one I may win the other."

"I do not forbid you to hope, my dear fellow," said Birotteau, touched by Anselme's tone.

"Very well, sir; may I begin to look out at once for a store, so as to begin as soon as possible?"

"Yes, my boy. To-morrow we will shut ourselves up in the factory. You might look in at Livingston's on your way to the Rue des Lombards and see if my hydraulic press will be in working order by to-morrow. To-night, at dinner-time, we will go to see that great man, kind Monsieur Vauquelin, and ask him about this. He has been investigating the composition of hair quite lately, trying to find out its coloring matter, and where it comes from, and what hair is made of. It all lies in that, Popinot. You shall know my secret, and all that remains to do is to exploit it intelligently. Look in at Pieri Bérard's before you go round to Livingston. My boy, Monsieur Vauquelin's disinterestedness is one of the great troubles of my life. You cannot get him to accept anything. Luckily, I found out from Chiffreville that he wanted a Madonna at Dresden, engraved by one Müller, and, after two years of inquiry for it in Germany, Bérard has found a copy at last—a proof before letters on India paper; it cost fifteen hundred francs, my boy. And now to-day our benefactor shall see it in the antechamber when he comes to the door with us; framed, of course, you will make sure of that. So in that way we shall recall ourselves to his memory, my wife and I; for, as to gratitude, we have put his name in our prayers every day these sixteen years. For my part, I shall never forget him; but, you know, Popinot, these men of science are so deep in their work that they forget everything, wife and children, and those they have done a good turn to. As for the like of us, our little intelligence permits us to have warm hearts at any rate. That is some comfort for not being a great man. These gentlemen at the Institute are all brain, as you will see; you will never come across one of them in a church. There is Monsieur Vauquelin, always in his study when he isn't in

his laboratory; I like to believe though that he thinks of God while he analyzes His works. This is the understanding: I am to find the capital, I will put you in possession of my secret, and we will divide the profits equally, so there will be no need to draw up a deed. Good success to us both! We will tune our pipes. Off with you, my boy; I have affairs of my own to see after. One moment, Popinot; in three weeks' time I am going to give a grand ball, have a suit of clothes made, and come to it like a merchant already in a good way of business——"

This last piece of kindness touched Popinot so much that he grasped César's large hand in his and kissed it. The good man's confidence had flattered the lover, and a man in love is capable of anything.

"Poor fellow!" said Birotteau, as he watched his assistant hurrying across the gardens of the Tuileries, "if Césarine only cared about him! But he limps, his hair is the color of a basin, and girls are such queer things! I can scarcely believe that Césarine—— And her mother would like to see her a notary's wife. Alexandre Crottat would make her a rich woman; money makes anything endurable, while there is no happiness that will stand the test of poverty. After all, I have made up my mind that my girl shall be mistress of herself, so that she stops short of folly."

Birotteau's next-door neighbor, Cayron by name, was a dealer in umbrellas, sunshades, and walking-sticks. He came from Languedoc, his business was not doing well, and César had helped him several times. Cayron asked nothing better than to contract his limits and to effect a proportionate saving in house rent by giving up two second-floor rooms to the wealthy perfumer.

"Well, neighbor," said Birotteau familiarly as he entered the umbrella store, "my wife consents to the enlargement of our place. If you like, we will go round and see Monsieur Molineux at eleven o'clock."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," returned he of the umbrella store, "I have never asked anything for the concession on my part, but you know that a good man of business ought to turn everything to money."

"The deuce!" cried the perfumer; "I have no money to throw away, and I am waiting to know if my architect thinks the thing feasible. 'Before you settle anything,' so he said, 'we must know whether the floors are on a level; and then we must have Monsieur Molineux's leave to make an opening in the wall, and is it a party wall?' And after that I shall have to turn the staircase in my house, so as to alter the landing and have the whole place level from end to end. There will be a lot of expense, and I don't want to ruin myself."

"Ah, sir," cried the Languedocien, "when *you* are ruined, heaven and earth will come together and have a family."

Birotteau stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe, and came down again.

"Beside," Cayron went on, "I only ask you to take this paper of me——" and he held out a little statement for five thousand francs and sixteen bills.

"Ah!" said the perfumer, turning them over, "all for small amounts, at two months and three months——"

"Take them of me, and don't charge me more than six per cent.," pleaded the umbrella dealer humbly.

"Am I a Jew?" asked the perfumer reproachfully.

"Goodness, sir, I took them to du Tillet that used to be your assistant, and he would not have them at any price; he wanted to know how much I would consent to lose, no doubt."

"I know none of these signatures," said the perfumer.

"Well, we have funny names in the cane and umbrella trade; they are hawkers."

"Well, well; I do not say that I will take the lot, but I might manage to take all at the shortest dates."

"Don't leave me to run after those horse-leeches that drain

us of the best part of the profits, for a thousand francs at four months; take the lot, sir! I do so little discounting that no one gives me credit; that is the death of us poor retailers in a small way."

"Well, well, I will take your little bills. Célestin shall settle it with you. Be ready at eleven. Here comes my architect, Monsieur Grindot," added the perfumer, as he saw the young man whom he had met by appointment at Monsieur de la Billardière's house on the previous evening. "Unlike most men of talent, you are punctual, sir," said César, in his most genteel manner.

"If punctuality—in the phrase of a king who was a clever man as well as a great statesman—is the courtesy of kings, it is no less the fortune of architects. Time—time is money; most of all for your artists. Architecture combines all the other arts, I permit myself to say. We will not go through the store," he added, as he showed the way to the sham carriage entrance.

Four years ago M. Grindot had taken the Grand Prize for architecture; and now he had just returned from a three years' sojourn in Rome at the expense of the State. While he was in Italy the young artist had thought of his art; in Paris he turned his attention to money-making. Governments alone can give the necessary millions to erect public buildings and monuments to an architect's enduring fame; and it is so natural, when fresh from Rome, to take one's self for a Fontaine or a Percier, that every ambitious young architect has a leaning toward ministerialism; so the subsidized Liberal, metamorphosed into a Royalist, sought to find patrons in power; and when a Grand Prize conducts himself after this fashion, his comrades call him a sycophant.

Two courses lay open to the youthful architect—he might serve the perfumer or make as much as he could out of him. But Birotteau the deputy-mayor; Birotteau, the future possessor of half of that building estate near the Madeleine,

where a quarter full of handsome houses was sure to be built sooner or later, was a man worth humoring, so Grindot sacrificed present gain to future opportunities. Patiently he listened to the plans, ideas, and vain repetitions of this storekeeping Philistine, the artist's butt and laughing-stock, and the particular object of his scorn, and followed the perfumer about his house, bowing respectfully to his ideas. When Birotteau had said all that he had to say, the young architect tried to give a summary of his own views.

"You have three windows looking out upon the street in your own house," he said, "as well as the window that is wasted on the stairs and required for the landing. To these four windows you add two on the same floor in the next house, by turning the staircase so that you can walk on level from one end to the other on the side nearest the street."

"You have understood me exactly," said the amazed perfumer.

"To carry out your plan, we shall have to light the new staircase from above, and contrive a porter's lodge in the plinth."

"Plinth?"

"Yes; the part of the wall under the——"

"I see, sir."

"As to your rooms, and their arrangements and decoration, give me *carte-blanche*. I should like to make them worthy——"

"Worthy! You have said the very word, sir."

"How long can you give me to carry out this scheme of decoration?"

"Twenty days."

"What are you prepared to put down for the workmen?"

"Well, what are the repairs likely to mount up to?"

"An architect can estimate the cost of a new building almost to a centime," said the other; "but as I have not undertaken a *bourgeois* job as yet (pardon me, sir, the word slipped

out), I ought to tell you beforehand that it is impossible for me to give estimates for alterations and repairs. In a week's time I might be able to make a rough guess. Put your confidence in me; you shall have a charming staircase lighted from above, and a pretty vestibule, and in the plinth——"

"The plinth again!"

"Do not be anxious. I will find room for a little porter's lodge. The alteration and decoration of your rooms will be a labor of love. Yes, sir, I am thinking of art and not of making money. Above all things, if I am to succeed, I must be talked about, must I not? So, in my opinion, the best way is not to haggle with tradesmen, but to obtain a good effect cheaply."

"With such ideas, young man," Birotteau said patronizingly, "you will succeed."

"So you will yourself arrange with the bricklayers, painters, locksmiths, carpenters, and cabinet-makers; and I, for my part, undertake to check their accounts. You will simply agree to pay me a fee of two thousand francs; it will be money well laid out. Put the whole place into my hands by twelve o'clock to-morrow and tell me whom you mean to employ."

"What is it likely to cost at first sight?" asked the elated Birotteau.

"Ten to twelve thousand francs," said Grindot, "without counting the furniture; for, of course, you will refurnish the rooms. Will you give me the address of your carpet manufacturer? I ought to come to an understanding with him about the colors, so as to have a harmonious unity."

"Monsieur Braschon in the Rue Saint-Antoine has my order," said the perfumer, assuming a ducal air.

The architect made a note of the address on one of those little tablets which are unmistakably a pretty woman's gift.

"Well," said Birotteau, "I leave it all to you, sir. Still, wait until I have arranged to take over the lease of the two

rooms next door, and obtained permission to make an opening through the wall."

"Send me a note this evening," said the architect. "I must spend the night in drawing plans. We architects would rather work for a city merchant than for the King of Prussia; that is to say, as far as our own taste is concerned. In any case, I will set about taking measurements, the height of the rooms, the dimensions of the door and window embrasures, and the size of the windows."

"It must be finished by the date I have given, or it is no good."

"It certainly must," returned the architect. "The men shall work day and night, and we will employ processes for drying the paint; but do not let builders swindle you, make them quote beforehand, and have the agreement in writing."

"Paris is the only place in the world where one can make such strokes of the wand," said Birotteau, indulging in a flourish worthy of some Asiatic potentate in the "Arabian Nights." "Do me the honor of coming to my ball, sir. All men of talent do not feel the contempt for trade which some heap upon it; and I expect you will meet one scientific man of the highest rank—Monsieur Vauquelin of the Institute! —beside Monsieur de la Billardière, Messieurs le Comte de Fontaine, Lebas, a judge, and president of the Tribunal of Commerce; and several magistrates, le Comte de Granville of the Court Royal, and Popinot of the Court of First Instance, Camusot of the Tribunal of Commerce, and his father-in-law Cardot. Perhaps, even le Duc de Lenoncourt, First Gentleman of the Bedchamber. It is a gathering of my friends, quite as much in honor of—er—the liberation of the soil—as to celebrate my—promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor."

Grindot's gesture was peculiar.

"Possibly—I have deserved this—signal mark of royal—favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribu-

nal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's church on the 13th Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. These claims to——"

Constance, in morning dress, came out of Césarine's bedroom, where she had been dressing; her first glance stopped her husband's fervid eloquence; he cast about for some every-day phrase which should modestly convey the tidings of the glory awaiting him on the morrow.

"Here, pet, this is M. *de* Grindot, a distinguished young man of great talent. This gentleman is the architect whom Monsieur de la Billardière recommended; he will superintend our little alterations here."

The perfumer placed himself so that his wife could not see him, and put his finger on his lips as he uttered the word *little*. The architect understood.

"Constance, this gentleman will take the dimensions of the rooms. Let him do it, dear," said Birotteau, and he whisked out into the street.

"Will it cost a great deal?" Constance asked the architect.

"No, madame; six thousand francs, roughly speaking——"

"Roughly speaking!" cried Mme. Birotteau. "Sir, I beg of you not to begin without an estimate, and to do nothing until a contract has been signed. I know the way of those gentlemen the builders—six thousand means twenty thousand. We are not in a position to squander money. I beg of you, sir, although my husband is certainly master in his own house, to leave him time to think this over."

"Monsieur told me, madame, that he must have the rooms finished in twenty days; if we make a delay, you may incur the expense without obtaining the result."

"There is expense and expense," said the fair mistress of the Queen of Roses.

"Eh! madame; is it so very glorious, do you think, for an architect who would like to erect public monuments to

superintend alterations in a private house? I only undertook the little commission to oblige Monsieur de la Billardière, and if you are alarmed——"

He made as if he would withdraw.

"Well, well, sir," said Constance, going back to her room. Once there, she hid her head on her daughter's shoulder. "My child," she cried, "your father is ruining himself! He has engaged an architect who wears mustaches and an imperial on his chin, and talks about erecting public monuments! He will fling the house out of the windows to build us a Louvre. César is always in a hurry when there is anything crazy to be done; he only told me about the plan last night, and he is setting about it this morning."

"Bah! mamma, never mind papa; Providence has always taken care of you," said Césarine, putting her arms about her mother. Then she (the demoiselle) went to the piano, to show the architect that a perfumer's daughter was no stranger to the fine arts.

When the architect came into the room, he was surprised by Césarine's beauty, and stood almost dumfounded. For the artist saw before him Césarine just come from her little room, in her loose morning-gown, bright and blooming with the freshness and the bloom of eighteen years, blue-eyed, and slender, and fair-haired. Youth gave the elasticity (so rare in Paris) which lends firmness to the most delicate tissues; youth tinted the blue network of veins throbbing beneath the transparent skin with the color adored by painters. For though she lived in the relaxing atmosphere of a Parisian store, where the fresh air can scarcely penetrate and the sunlight seldom comes, the outdoor life of Roman Trasteverine could not have been a more successful beautifier than Césarine's manner of living. Her thick hair grew erect like her father's, and, being dressed high, afforded a view of a well-set neck among a shower of curls—the elaborate coiffure of the damsels of the counter, in whom a desire to shine inspires a

more than English attention to trifling details in matters of the toilet.

Césarine's beauty was neither that of an English court lady nor of a French duchess, but the plump and auburn-haired comeliness of Rubens' Flemish women. She had inherited her father's turned-up nose, but its delicacy of outline gave a sprightly charm to a face of the essentially French type so well rendered by Largillière. The rich silken tissue of the skin indicated the abundant vitality of girlhood. Her mother's broad brow was lightened by a girlish serenity, untroubled by care, and there was a tender grace in the expression of the blue liquid eyes of the happy-hearted, fair-haired maid. If happiness had taken from her face the romantic interest which painters inevitably give to their compositions by an expression somewhat too pensive, the vague, wistful instincts of the young girl who has never left her mother's wing made an approach to this ideal. With all her apparent slenderness, she was strongly made. Her feet indicated her father's peasant origin, a racial defect, like the redness of her hands—the sign-manual of a purely bourgeois descent. Sooner or later she was sure to grow stout. Occasionally young and fashionable women had come within her ken ; and in course of time she had acquired from them the instinct of dress, certain ways of carrying her head, and manners of speaking and moving, thus copied, which turned the heads of the assistants and other young men ; in their eyes she seemed to have a distinguished air.

Popinot had vowed to himself that no woman but Césarine should be his wife. This mobile blonde, whom a glance seemed to read, who seemed ready to melt into tears at a harsh word, was the one woman in whose presence he could feel conscious of masculine superiority. This charming girl inspired love, without leaving time to consider whether or not she had sufficient soul to insure that the love should be lasting ; but what need is there for what we in Paris call *ésprit*, in a

class where the essential elements of happiness are good-sense and virtue?

In character, Césarine was a second edition of her mother, slightly improved by an education which had taught her superfluous accomplishments. She was fond of music, and had made a crayon drawing of the "Madonna of the Chair;" she perused the works of Mesdames Cottin and Riccoboni, and the writings of Fénelon, Racine, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. She never appeared at her mother's side at the cash desk save for a few moments before dinner, or when, on rare occasions, she took her place. Her father and mother, like all self-made people, who hasten to plant the seeds of ingratitude in their children by putting the younger generation on a higher level, delighted to make an idol of Césarine, who, happily, possessed the good qualities of her class and did not take advantage of their weakness.

Mme. Birotteau followed the architect's movements with earnest, anxious eyes; looking on in consternation, calling her daughter's attention to the strange gyrations of the foot-rule, as Grindot took his measurements after the manner of architects and builders. For her, each one of those strokes of the wand seemed to lay the place under an evil enchantment and boded ill to the house; she would fain have had the walls less lofty and the rooms smaller, and dared not put any questions to the young man as to the results of this sorcery.

"Be easy, madame," he said, with a smile; "I shall not carry anything away."

Césarine could not help laughing.

"Sir," pleaded Constance, who did not so much as notice the architect's quip, "aim at economy; some day we may be able to make you a return——"

Before César went to M. Molineux, the landlord of the next house, he asked Roguin for the transfer of the lease

which Alexandre Crottat was to have drawn up. As he came away from the notary's house, he saw du Tillet at Roguin's study window. Although the *liaison* between his sometime assistant and Mme. Roguin was a sufficient explanation of du Tillet's presence in the house at a time when the negotiations for the building land were impending, Birotteau, trustful though he was, felt uncomfortable. Du Tillet's animated face suggested that a discussion was going on.

"Suppose that he should be in the business!" he asked himself, in an access of his commercial prudence.

The suspicion flashed like lightning across his mind. He turned again and saw Mme. Roguin at the window; and then the banker's presence no longer looked so suspicious.

"Still, how if Constance was right?" he asked himself. "How stupid I am to pay any attention to a woman's notions! However, I will talk it over this morning with our uncle. It is only a step from the Cour Batave, where Molineux lives, to the Rue des Bourdonnais."

A suspicious onlooker, a man of business with some experience of rogues, would have been warned; but Birotteau's previous career, together with his lack of mental grasp (for he was but little fitted for retracing a chain of inductions, a process by which an able man arrives at a cause), all led to his ruin. He found the umbrella dealer dressed in his best, and was starting away with him to the landlord, when Virginie, the servant, caught her master by the arm.

"The mistress hopes you will not go out again, sir——"

"Come!" cried Birotteau; "some more women's notions!"

"Without taking your cup of coffee. It is ready for you."

"Oh! all right. I have so many things in my head, neighbor," said Birotteau, turning to Cayron, "that I do not listen to my stomach. Be so good as to walk on; we shall meet each other at Monsieur Molineux's door, unless you go

up and explain the matter to him first. We should save time that way."

M. Molineux was an eccentric person of independent means, a specimen of a kind of humanity which you will no more find out of Paris than you will find Iceland moss growing anywhere out of Iceland. The comparison is but so much the more apt, for that the man in question belonged to that doubtful borderland between the animal and vegetable kingdoms which awaits the Mercier, who shall classify the various *cryptogamia* which strike root, thrive, or die among the plaster walls of the strange unwholesome old houses affected by the species.

This particular human plant was an umbellifer, to judge by the blue tubular cap which crowned a stem sheathed in a pair of greenish-colored breeches, and terminated by bulbous roots enveloped in list slippers. At first sight the plant seems harmless and colorless enough; there is certainly nothing to suggest poison in its appearance. In this strange freak of nature you would have recognized the typical shareholder, who believes in all the news which the daily press baptizes with printer's ink, whose "Look at the paper" is a final appeal to authority; this (you would have thought) was the bourgeois, essentially a lover of order, always (in theory) in rebellion against the powers that be, to whom in practice he punctually yields obedience; a ferocious creature, take him singly, who grows tame in a crowd of his like. The man who is obdurate as a bailiff where his dues are concerned, gives fresh groundsel to his birds, and saves the fish-bones for the cat; he looks up in the middle of making out a receipt to whistle to the canary; he is suspicious as a turnkey, but will hurry to invest his money in some doubtful undertaking, and then try to recover his losses by the most sordid meanness. The noxious qualities of this hybrid growth are only discovered by use; its nauseous bitterness requires the coction of some piece of business wherein its interests are mingled with those of men.

Like all Parisians, Molineux felt a need to make his power felt. He craved that particular privilege of a sovereignty more or less exercised by every creature, down to the very porter, over a larger or smaller number of victims—a woman, a child, a clerk, or lodger, a horse, a dog, or monkey—that part of domination which consists in handing on to another the mortifications received by an aspirant to higher spheres. The tiresome little old person in question, having neither wife, nor child, nor niece, nor nephew, treated his charwoman so harshly that she gave him no opportunity of venting his spleen upon her, and avoided all collision with him by a rigorous discharge of her duties.

So his appetite for domestic tyranny being thus balked, he was fain to find other ways of satisfying it. He had made a patient study of the law of landlord and tenant and of the legal aspects of the party-wall; he had fathomed the mysteries of jurisprudence with regard to house-property in Paris, and was learned in its infinitely minute intricacies with regard to boundaries and abutments, easements, rates, charges, regulations for the cleansing of the street, hangings for Fête-Dieu processions, waste-pipes, lights, projections over the public way, and the near proximity of insanitary dwellings. All his mental and physical energies, all his intelligence, was devoted to maintaining his authority as a landlord with a high hand; he had made a hobby of his occupation, and the hobby was becoming a mania.

He loved to protect citizens against encroachments on their rights, but opportunities occurred so seldom that his thwarted passion expended itself upon his tenants. A tenant became his enemy, his inferior, his subject, his vassal. He felt that their homage was a due, and regarded those who passed him without a salutation on the stairs as boors. He made out his receipts himself, and sent them at noon on the quarter-day; and those who were behindhand received a summons by a certain hour. Then followed a distraint and costs, and all

the cavalry of the law came into the field with the celerity of "the machine," as the headsman calls his instrument of execution. Molineux gave no grace and no delay; his heart was indurated on the side of rents.

"I will lend you the money if you want it;" he would say to a solvent tenant, "but pay me my rent; any getting behindhand with the rent means a loss of interest for which the law provides no remedy."

After a prolonged study of the skittish humors of successive tenants who conformed to no standard, and, like successive dynasties, nor more nor less, invariably overturned the institutions of their predecessors, Molineux had promulgated a charter which he observed religiously. By virtue of it the good man never did any repairs; none of his chimneys smoked, his staircases were always in order, his ceilings white, his cornices above reproach, his floors held securely to the joists, and there was no fault to find with the paint. All the locks had been put in within the last three years, every window-pane was whole, and as for cracks in the walls they did not exist; he could see no broken tiles in the floors till the tenants were leaving the house. He usually appeared upon the scene to receive the incoming tenants with a locksmith and a painter and glazier, very handy fellows, he said. The tenant was doubtless at liberty to make improvements; but if the thriftless creature redecorated his rooms, old Molineux set his wits to work and pondered night and day how to dislodge him and let the newly papered and painted abode to another comer. He set his snares, bided his time, and began the whole series of his unhallowed devices. There was no subtlety in the regulations of Paris with regard to leases that he did not know. He indited polite and amiable communications to his victims; but beneath the manner, as beneath the harmless and obliging expression of the pettifogging scribbler himself, lurked the spirit of a Shylock.

He must always be paid six months in advance, to be de-

ducted from the last half-year's rent, subject to a host of thorny conditions of his own invention. He assured himself that the value of the tenant's furniture was sufficient to cover the rent, and reconnoitred every new tenant like a detective when he came in. There were some occupations which he did not like, and the least sound of a hammer frightened him. When the time came for handing over a lease, he kept it back for a week, conning it over for fear it should contain what he denominated "notary's *et ceteras.*"

Apart from his character of landlord, Jean-Baptiste Molineux was apparently good-natured and obliging. He could play a game of boston without complaining of being badly seconded by his partner; his stock subjects for conversation were of the ordinary bourgeois kind, and he found the same things laughable—the arbitrary acts of bakers (the rascals), who give short weights, which are winked at by the police, the heroic seventeen deputies of the Left. He read the Curé Meslier's "Bon Sens" (Free Thinker), yet went to mass, halting between Deism and Christianity; but he subscribed nothing for sacramental bread, under the plea that you must resist the encroachments of the priesthood. The indefatigable redresser of grievances would write to this effect to the newspapers, though the newspapers neither inserted his letters nor replied to them. Molineux was, in short, in many respects the ordinary estimable citizen who burns a yule-log at Christmas, draws for king on Twelfth Night, plays tricks on the First of April, makes the rounds of the boulevards when the weather is fine, goes to watch the skating; and on days when there are to be fireworks in the Place Louis XV. will take his place there at two o'clock in the afternoon with a piece of bread in his pocket, so as to be "in the front row."

The Cour Batave, where the little old man lived, is a result of one of those freaks of the speculative builder which cannot be explained after they have taken substantial form. It is a cloister-like building with its freestone arcading, its covered

galleries surrounding the court with a fountain in the middle —a thirsty fountain with its lion jaws agape, not to supply, but to ask for water of every passer-by. Possibly it was intended for a sort of Palais-Royal to adorn the Faubourg Saint-Denis. There is a little light and stir of life during the day in the unwholesome pile shut in on all four sides by tall houses; it lies in the centre of a labyrinth of dank alleys, where the rheumatism lurks for the hurrying foot-passenger, a maze of dark, narrow passages which converge here and connect the Quartier des Halles and the Quartier Saint-Martin by the famous Rue Quincampoix; but at night there is no spot in Paris more deserted, and these little slums might be called the catacombs of commerce. It is the sink of several industries; and if there are few natives of Batavia proper, there are plenty of small tradesmen.

Naturally, all the suites of rooms in this merchant's palace have but one outlook—into the central courtyard—and for this and other reasons the rents asked are of the lowest. M. Molineux inhabited one of the angles of the building. Considerations of health had prompted the choice of a sixth-floor lodging; for fresh air was only to be had at a height of seventy feet from the ground. From the leads, where the worthy owner of house-property was wont to take exercise, he enjoyed a charming view of the windmills of Montmartre. He grew flowers up there, too, in defiance of police regulations against these hanging-gardens of the modern Babylon. His sixth-floor establishment consisted of four rooms, without counting the water-closets on the floor above, a valuable property to which his claim was incontestable; he had the key, he had established them. On a first entrance, an indecent bareness at once revealed the miserly nature of the man. Half-a-dozen straw-bottomed chairs stood in the lobby; there was a glazed earthenware stove; and on the walls, covered with a bottle-green paper, hung four prints bought at sales. In the dining-room you beheld a couple of sideboards, two cages full

of birds, a table covered with oilcloth, a weather-glass, mahogany chairs with horsehair cushions, and through a French window a view of the aforesaid hanging-gardens. Short, antiquated, green silk curtains adorned the sitting-room, and the white-painted wooden furniture was upholstered in green Utrecht velvet. As for the furniture of the old bachelor's room, it was of the period of Louis XV.; disfigured by prolonged wear, and so dirty that a woman in a white gown would have shrunk from contact with it. The mantel boasted a clock; the dial, between two columns, served as a pediment beneath a statuette of Pallas brandishing a lance—a fabulous personage of antiquity. The tiled floor was so littered over with plates full of scraps for the cats that it was scarcely possible to move about without setting a foot in one of them. Above the rosewood chest of drawers hung a pastel—Molineux in his youth. Add a few books, tables covered with shabby, green cardboard boxes, a case full of the stuffed forms of some departed canaries on a console table, and, to complete the list, a bed so chilly-looking that it might have been a rebuke to a Carmelite.

César Birotteau was charmed with Molineux's exquisite politeness. He found the latter in his gray flannel dressing-gown, keeping an eye on the milk set on a little cast-iron plate warmer, in a corner of the hearth, while he poured the contents of a brown earthen pipkin, in which he had been boiling coffee-grounds, into his coffee-pot by spoonfuls at a time. The umbrella dealer had opened the door, lest his landlord should be disturbed in this occupation; but Molineux, holding mayors and deputy-mayors ("our municipal officers," as he called them) in great veneration, rose at first sight of the magistrate, and stood cap in hand until the great Birotteau should be seated.

"No, sir—— Yes, sir—— Ah, sir, if I had known that I was to have the honor of housing a member of the municipal government of Paris amid my humble Penates, pray believe

that I should have made it my business to repair to your house; although I am your landlord, or—on the point—of—being——"

Here Birotteau by a gesture entreated him to put on his cap.

"I shall do nothing of the kind; I shall remain bare-headed until you are seated, and have put on your hat if you have a cold. My room is rather chilly; my narrow means do not permit—God bless you, Mr. Deputy-mayor!"

Birotteau had sneezed while fumbling for his papers. He held them out, not without remarking that to save any delay he had had them made out at his own expense by M. Roguin his notary.

"I do not call Monsieur Roguin's knowledge in question; 'tis an old name, well known in the Parisian notariat; but I have my little ways of doing things, and I look after my affairs myself, a hobby excusable enough; and, then, my notary is——"

"But this is such a simple matter," said the perfumer, accustomed to prompt decisions on the part of buyers and sellers.

"*Simple!*" echoed Molineux. "Nothing is simple where house-property is concerned. Ah! you are not a landlord, sir; so much the happier, you! If you but knew the lengths to which a tenant will push ingratitude and what precautions we have to take! Now just listen to this, sir; I have a tenant that——" and for fifteen minutes he held forth, relating how that M. Gendrin, a draughtsman, had eluded the vigilance of the caretaker in the Rue Saint-Honoré. M. Gendrin had perpetrated scandals worthy of a Marat, obscene drawings! and the police tolerated it; nay, they were made with the connivance of the police! Then this Gendrin, an artist of thoroughly immoral character, had gone back to the house with loose women, and made it impossible to go up and down the stairs, a prank worthy of a man who drew caricatures to

ridicule the Government. And why all these misdeeds? Because he was asked to pay his rent on the 15th. Gendrin and Molineux were about to go to law about it; for, while the artist did not pay, he insisted on occupying the empty rooms. Molineux received anonymous letters—from Gendrin, no doubt—threatening to murder him some night in the alleys about the Cour Batave.

"Things have arrived at such a pitch, sir," he went on, "that the prefect of police, to whom in confidence I related my difficulty (at the same time I took the opportunity of saying a word or two touching the alterations that ought to be made in the provisions of the law for such cases), gave me an authorization to carry firearms in self-defense."

The little old man got up to look for his pistols.

"Here they are, sir!" cried he.

"But you have nothing of that kind to fear from me, sir," said Birotteau, glancing at Cayron with a smile that plainly expressed his pity for such a man.

Molineux caught the glance, and was shocked to see such a look on the countenance of a "municipal officer," whose duty it was to see to the safety of those in his district. He could have forgiven it in anybody else, but in Birotteau it was unpardonable.

"Sir," Molineux answered drily, "one of the most highly respected judges in the Consular Tribune, a deputy-mayor, and an honorable merchant, would not condescend to such baseness, for baseness it is! But in this particular case you want the consent of your landlord, Monsieur le Comte de Granville, before you make a hole in the wall, and stipulations must be made in the agreement touching the restoration of the wall on the expiration of the lease. As a matter of fact, too, the rent is a great deal lower than it will be; rents will go up all about the Place Vendôme; they are going up already! The Rue Castiglione is about to be built. I am binding myself down—I am binding—myself——"

"Let us have done with it," said Birotteau. "What do you want? I have had enough experience of business to guess that your reasonings can be silenced by the great argument—money! Well, how much do you want?"

"Nothing but what is fair, sir. How long has your lease to run?"

"Seven years," answered Birotteau.

"What may not my second floor be worth in seven years' time?" cried Molineux. "What will two furnished rooms let for over in your quarter? More than two hundred francs a month very likely! I am binding myself; binding myself down by a lease. So we will set down the rent at fifteen hundred francs. At that figure I will consent to receive you as a tenant for the two rooms instead of M. Cayron here," giving the dealer a sly wink, "and let you have them on lease for seven consecutive years. The opening in the wall you will make at your own charges, subject to your bringing to me proof that Monsieur le Comte de Granville sanctions it and waives all his rights in the matter. Whatever happens in consequence of the small opening, the responsibility will rest upon you; but you shall be in nowise bound to reinstate the wall so far as I am concerned; you shall pay me down five hundred francs now instead; we never can tell what may happen; and I don't want to run about after anybody to put up my wall again for me."

"The conditions seem to me scarcely fair," put in Birotteau.

"Then you must pay me down seven hundred and fifty francs *hic et nunc*, to be carried forward till the last six months of possession; the lease will be a sufficient discharge. Oh! I will take bills of exchange for value received in rent, at any date you please, so that I have my guarantee. I am a plain-dealing man, and go straight to the point in business. We will stipulate that you shall wall up the door on my staircase, where you have no right of way—at your own expense—in brick and mortar. Reassure yourself, I shall not call upon you

to make it good when the lease expires; I shall regard the five hundred francs as an indemnity. You will always find me reasonable, sir."

"We in business are not so particular," said the perfumer; "if we had all these formalities, we should do no business at all."

"Oh, in business, that is quite another thing, especially in the perfumery line, where everything slips off and on like a glove," said the little old man, with a sour smile. "But with house-property in Paris, sir, you cannot be too particular. Why, I had a tenant in the Rue Montorgueil——"

"I should be very sorry to delay your breakfast, sir," said Birotteau; "here are the deeds, set them right, all that you ask me is agreed to; let us sign the documents to-morrow, and give our promises by word of mouth to-day, for to-morrow my architect must be put in possession of the place."

Molineux looked again at the umbrella dealer. "There is part of the term expired, sir; Monsieur Cayron has no mind to pay for it; we will add the amount to the little bills, so that the agreement will run from January to January. That will be more business-like."

"So be it," said Birotteau.

"There is the sou in the franc for the porter——"

"Why, you are not allowing me to use the staircase and the doorway; it is not right that——"

"Oh! but you are a tenant!" cried little Molineux in peremptory tones, up in arms for the principle involved. "You must pay door and window taxes and your share of the others. If once we clearly understand each other, sir, there will be no difficulties hereafter. Is your business rapidly increasing, sir; are you doing well?"

"Yes," said Birotteau, "but that is not my reason. I am inviting a few of my friends, partly to celebrate the evacuation of the foreign troops, partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor——"

"Aha!" said the flattering Molineux, "a well-deserved honor."

"Yes," said Birotteau. "It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of royal favor by acting in my capacity at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon; these claims——"

"Equal those of our heroes in the late army. The ribbon is red, because it has been dyed in blood shed for France."

At these words, a quotation from the "Constitutionnel," Birotteau could not resist the impulse to invite little Molineux, who grew quite incoherent in his thanks, and was almost ready to forgive the slight which had been put upon him. The old man went as far as the stairhead with his new tenant, overwhelming him with civilities.

As soon as they were outside in the Cour Batave, Birotteau looked at Cayron with an amused expression.

"I did not think that there was such a weak-minded creature in existence," he said; "idiot" had been on the tip of his tongue, but he suppressed it in time.

"Ah, sir!" said Cayron, "everybody is not so clever as you are."

Birotteau might be excused for thinking himself a clever man compared with Molineux; the umbrella-dealer's reply drew a pleasant smile from him; he took leave of his companion with a regal air.

"Here am I at the Market," he said to himself; "let us arrange about the hazelnuts."

After an hour spent in making inquiries, the market-women referred Birotteau to the Rue des Lombards, the headquarters of the trade in nuts for confectionery, and there his friends the Matifats informed him that the only wholesale dealer in hazelnuts was one Mme. Angélique Madou, resident in the Rue Perrin-Gasselin; and that this was the one house in the

trade for genuine Provençal filberts and white Alpine hazelnuts.

The Rue Perrin-Gasselin lies in a quadrangle bounded by the quay, the Rue Saint-Denis, the Rue de la Ferronnerie, and the Rue de la Monnaie, a labyrinth of slums which are, as it were, the entrails of Paris. Here countless numbers of heterogeneous and nondescript industries are carried on; evil-smelling trades, and the manufacture of the daintiest finery, herrings and lawn, silk and honey, butter and tulle, jostle each other in its squalid precincts. Here are the headquarters of those multitudinous small trades which Paris no more suspects in its midst than a man surmises the functions performed by the pancreas in the human economy. In this congested district, in which one Bidault of the Rue Grenétat (otherwise known as Gigonnet the pawnbroker) played the part of leech, the whole stock of goods sold in the Great Market is kept. The ancient stables are warehouses where tons of oil are stored; the old coach-houses hold thousands of pairs of cotton stockings.

Mme. Madou, sometime a fish-wife, had gone into the "dry-fruit line" some ten years before this present year of grace, on her entrance into a partnership with the late owner of the business, who had an old-established connection among the ladies of the Great Market. Her beauty, of a vigorous and provocative order, had disappeared in excessive stoutness. She lived on the first floor of a yellow, dilapidated house, held together by iron clamps at every story. The departed dealer in dry-fruit had succeeded in ridding himself of competitors and had secured a monopoly of the trade; so that, in spite of some slight defects of education, his successor could continue in the same groove, and came and went in her warehouses, old out-buildings, stables, and workshops, where she waged war against insect life with some success.

Mme. Angélique Madou dispensed with counting-house, safe, and book-keeping (for she could neither read nor write),

and answered a letter by blows of the fist, for she looked upon it as an insult. In other respects she was a good-natured soul, with a high-colored countenance, and a bandanna handkerchief tied about her head beneath her cap, and a trumpet voice which won the respect of the carmen who brought goods to the Rue Perrin-Gasselin, and whose "rows" with her usually ended in a small bottle of white wine. She could not well have any trouble with the growers who supplied her, for she always paid cash on delivery, the only way of carrying on such a business as hers, and Mother Madou went into the country to see them in the summer-time.

Birotteau found this shrewish saleswoman among her sacks of hazelnuts, chestnuts, and walnuts.

"Good-day, my dear lady," said the jaunty Birotteau flippantly.

"*Your dear!*" returned she. "So you have pleasant recollections of your dealings with me, have you? Have we met each other at court?"

"I am a perfumer, and, what is more, deputy-mayor of the Second Arrondissement of Paris, and I have a right to expect a different tone from you."

"I marry when I have a mind," said the virago; "I am no customer at the mayor's office, and don't trouble deputy-mayors much. And as for my customers they adore me, and I talk to 'em as I please. If they don't like it, they may take themselves somewhere else."

"See what comes of a monopoly," muttered Birotteau.

"Popole? that's my godson; he has been up to some foolery perhaps; have you come for him, your worship?" she asked, in milder tones.

"No. I have the honor to inform you that I come to you as a customer."

"All right. What is your name, my lad? I haven't seen you here before."

"If that is the way you talk, you ought to sell your nuts

"GOOD-DAY, MY DEAR LADY," SAID BIROTTEAU FLIPPANTLY.


Mc MAHON

cheap," said Birotteau, and he mentioned his name and designation.

"Oh! you are the famous Birotteau with the handsome wife. Well, and what weight do you want of these little dears of hazelnuts, honey?"

"Six thousand pounds weight."

"It is as much as I have," said the saleswoman, with a voice like a cracked flute. "You are not in the do-nothing line, marrying the girls, and making scent for them. Lord, bless you! you do a trade, you do! Sorry I have so little for you! You will be a fine customer, and your name will be written on the heart of the woman that I love best in the world——"

"Who may that be?"

"Who but dear Madame Madou."

"What do you want for the nuts?"

"Twenty-five francs the hundredweight to you, mister, if you take the lot."

"Twenty-five francs," said Birotteau. "That is fifteen hundred francs! And I shall very likely take a hundred thousand pounds weight in a year!"

"But just look at the quality; no husks!" cried she, plunging a red arm into a sack of filberts. "Sound kernels, my dear sir. Just think, now, the grocers sell their mixed dessert fruits at twenty-four sous the pound, and in every four pounds they put more than a pound of hazelnuts. Am I to lose money on the goods to please you? You are a nice man, but I don't care enough about you yet to do that. As you are taking such a quantity, we might let you have them at twenty francs, for it won't do to send away a deputy-mayor; it would bring bad luck to the young couples! A good article; just feel the weight of them! They wouldn't go fifty to the pound! Sound nuts they are, not one single maggot among them!"

"Well, send six thousand pounds weight early to-morrow

morning to my factory in the Rue Faubourg du Temple, for two thousand francs at ninety days."

"They shall be punctual as a bride at a wedding. Well, good-by, Monsieur le Maire; we part good friends. But if it is all the same to you," following Birotteau into the court, "I would rather have a bill at forty days, for I have let you have them too cheap, and I can't afford to lose the interest on the money too. For all his sentimental ways, old Gigonnet sucks the life out of us, as a spider sucks a fly."

"Very well, yes, fifty days. But I'll have the nuts by weight, so as not to lose on the hollow ones. They must be weighed or I'll have nothing to do with them."

"Oh, the fox; he knows that dodge, does he?" said Mme. Madou; "you can't catch him napping. Those beggars in the Rue des Lombards put him up to that! Those great wolves yonder are all in a league to devour us poor lambs."

The lamb was five feet high and three feet around; she had not a vestige of a waist, and looked like a post in a striped cotton gown.

As he went along the Rue Saint-Honoré, the perfumer, lost in his schemes, meditated on his duel with Macassar Oil. He designed the labels, decided on the shape of the bottles, the quality of the corks, the color of the placards. And people say that there is no poetry in business! Newton did not make more calculations over the discovery of the famous binomial theorem than Birotteau made for the "Comagen Essence" (for it was an essence now; the words oil and essence possessed no definite meaning for him, and he went from the one to the other). All these combinations were seething in his head, and he mistook the ferment of an empty brain for the germination of an idea. So absorbed was he in his meditations that he went past the Rue des Bourdonnais, and, bethinking himself of his uncle, was obliged to retrace his steps.

Claude-Joseph Pillerault, formerly a retail hardware dealer

at the sign of the Golden Bell, was one of those human beings whose exterior is the outward and visible expression of a beautiful nature; and heart and brain, language and thought, his manner and the clothes that he wore, were all in harmony. He was the only relation that Mme. Birotteau had in the world, and upon her and on Césarine Pillerault had centred all his affections; for in the course of his business career he had lost his wife and his son, and a boy whom he had adopted, the son of his cook.

These cruel bereavements had given to the good man's thoughts a cast of Christian stoicism, a lofty doctrine which was the informing spirit of his life, and shed the radiance of a winter sunset over his last years, a glow that brings no warmth. There was a tinge of asceticism about the thin, worn face, where sallow and swarthy tones were harmoniously blended; you saw in it a striking resemblance to typical presentments of Time; but the every-day cares of a retail business had touched this face, there was less of the monumental quality, less of the grimness insisted upon by painters, sculptors, and designers of bronze figures for clocks.

Pillerault was of middle height, and thick-set rather than stout. Nature had fashioned him for hard work and a long life; he was strongly built, as his square shoulders indicated; a man of phlegmatic temper, whose feelings, though he could feel, did not lie on the surface. His quiet manner and resolute face indicated that he was little given to the expression of his emotions; but, reserved and undemonstrative though he was, there were depths of tenderness in Pillerault's nature. The principal characteristic of the hazel eyes, with dark specks in them, was their unvarying clearness. There were deep furrows in a forehead sallowed by time, narrow, contracted, and stern, and covered with gray hair, cut so short that it looked like felt. Prudence, not avarice, was expressed in the lines of the thin lips. The brightness of the eyes told of a temperate life; and, indeed, sincerity, a sense of duty, and

a real humility glorified his features and set off his face, as health does.

For sixty years he had led a hard and dreary existence, a constant struggle for a livelihood. It was the same story as César's own, with César's luck omitted. Pillerault had remained an assistant till he was thirty years old; he had embarked his capital in business at an age when César was investing his savings in *rentes;* then the law of the maximum had hit him hard, and his pickaxes and spades had been requisitioned. His taciturn wisdom, his foresight, and logical clear-headedness had had their effect on his "ways of doing business." His bargains were concluded, as a rule, by word of mouth, and difficulties seldom arose. Like most meditative people, he was an observer; he said little, and studied those who talked; often he had declined good bargains of which his neighbors had availed themselves, and subsequently repented, and vowed that Pillerault could smell out a rogue. He preferred sure gains, if of the smallest, to bold strokes of business involving heavy sums.

His stock of hardware consisted of grates, gridirons, cast-iron fire-dogs, boilers, and copper caldrons, hoes, and such agricultural implements as laborers use; somewhat unremunerative branches of a business that involves continual drudgery. Hardware is ponderous, awkward to handle, and difficult to store, and the profits are not heavy in proportion; so Pillerault had nailed up many a case, sent off many packages, and unloaded many vans. Never had a competence been more honorably earned, more thoroughly deserved, more to the credit of the man who had made it. He had never asked too much, had never run after business. Toward the end of the time, you might have seen him smoking his pipe in the doorway and watching his assistants at work. In 1814, when he retired, his actual capital at first consisted of seventy thousand francs, which he invested in Government stock that brought him in five thousand and some odd hundred francs a year,

with a further forty thousand francs due in five years' time, when the assistant to whom he had sold the business was to pay for it. On this amount, meanwhile, no interest was paid. For thirty years he had annually made seven per cent. on a turnover of a hundred thousand francs, and had lived on half his income. Such was his balance-sheet.

His neighbors, but little jealous of this by no means brilliant success, extolled his wisdom without comprehending it.

At the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie and the Rue Saint-Honoré stands the Café David, where a few retired tradesmen, such as Pillerault, congregate of an evening to take their coffee. At one time, Pillerault's adoption of his cook's son had occasioned a few jokes among its frequenters, such jokes as are addressed to a man looked up to among his fellows, for the hardware man received a respect for which he had not sought; his own self-respect sufficed him. So when Pillerault lost the poor young fellow there were more than two hundred people at the funeral who followed his adopted child to the grave. He behaved heroically in those days, making no parade of his grief, bearing it as a brave man bears sorrow. This increased the sympathy felt in the quarter for the "good man," as they called him, and the accent in which the words were spoken gave the words a wider and ennobled meaning when they applied to Pillerault.

Claude Pillerault had become so accustomed to the sober even tenor of his life that, when he retired from business and entered upon the time of leisure, which hangs so heavily on many a Parisian tradesman's hands, he could not unbend and divert himself with the amusements of an idle life; he made no change in his housekeeping; and his old age was enlivened by his political opinions, which, let us admit it at once, were those of the extreme Left.

Pillerault belonged to the artisan class, which the Revolution had brought into coöperation with the small storekeepers. The one blot on his character was the importance which he

attached to the victory of his principles; he dwelt fondly on his rights, on liberty, on the great results of the Revolution; he firmly believed that his political freedom and existence were being undermined by the jesuits, whose underhand power the Liberals discovered, and threatened by the ideas with which the "Constitutionnel" credited Monsieur the King's brother. He was, however, consistent in his life and in his ideas; there was nothing narrow in his political views; he never abused his adversaries, he held courtiers in suspicion, and believed in Republican virtues. He imagined that Manuel was guiltless of any excesses, that General Foy was a great man, and Casimir Périer without ambition; to his thinking, Lafayette was a political prophet, Courier a good man. In short, he beheld noble chimerical visions.

The good man was domestic in his habits; he made part of the family circle in which his niece lived—the Ragons, Judge Popinot, Joseph Lebas, and the Matifats. Fifteen hundred francs a year supplied his needs; the rest of his income was spent in charitable deeds and in presents to his grandniece; four times a year he gave a dinner to his friends at Roland's in the Rue du Hasard, and took them afterward to the play. He played the part of the old bachelor friend on whom married women draw bills at sight for their fancies; for a country excursion, a party for the opera or the Montagnes-Beaujon; and Pillerault would be very happy at such times in the pleasure which he was giving, and felt the gladness in other hearts.

If Molineux's character was written at large in his queer furniture, Pillerault's pure heart and simple life were no less revealed by his surroundings. His abode consisted of a lobby, a sitting-room, and bedroom. But for the difference in size, it might have been a Carthusian's cell. The lobby, floored with red tiles, which were beeswaxed, boasted but one window, hung with dimity curtains edged with scarlet; mahogany chairs, with red leather cushions and studded with brass nails,

stood against the wall, which was covered with an olive-green paper, and adorned with pictures—a "Declaration of Independence," a portrait of Bonaparte as First Consul, and a "Battle of Austerlitz." The furniture of the sitting-room, doubtless left to the upholsterer, was yellow, and covered with a flowered pattern; there was a carpet on the floor; the bronze ornaments on the mantel were not gilded. There was a painted fire-screen before the grate; a vase of artificial flowers under a glass shade stood on a console, and a liqueur stand on a round table covered with a cloth. It was evident from the unused look of the room that it was a concession to convention on the part of the retired hardware dealer, who rarely received visitors.

His own room was as bare as that of a monk or an old soldier, the two men who make the truest estimate of life. In the alcove a holy-water stoup caught the eye, a profoundly touching confession of faith in a Republican stoic and a strict anti-jesuit.

An old woman came in to do the work of the establishment; but, so great was Pillerault's reverence for womankind, that he would not allow her to clean his shoes and made an arrangement with a bootblack.

His costume was plain and never varied. He always wore a coat and breeches of blue cloth, a cotton vest, a white cravat, and very low walking shoes; and on high-days and holidays a coat with metal buttons. He rose, breakfasted, went out, dined, and returned home when the evening was over with the strictest regularity, for a methodical life conduces to health and length of days. César, the Ragons, and the Abbé Loraux always avoided the subject of politics; those of his own circle knew better than to court attack by trying to convert him. Like his nephew and the Ragons, he put great faith in Roguin; for him a notary of Paris was always a being to be venerated and probity incarnate. In the matter of the building land, Pillerault had examined it so thoroughly that the remembrance

of his investigations had given César moral support in the combat with his wife's forebodings.

As César climbed the seventy-two steps of the stairs which led to the low, brown doorway of his uncle's rooms, he thought within himself that the old man must be very hale to go up and down them daily without a murmur. He found the coat and breeches hanging on a peg outside, and Mme. Vaillant busy rubbing and brushing them; while the philosopher himself, in his gray flannel dressing-gown, was breakfasting by the fireside, and conning the reports of parliamentary debates in the "Constitutionnel" or the "Journal du Commerce."

"The affair is settled, uncle," said César, "they are just about to draft the documents; but if you have any doubts or regret about it, there is still time to cry off."

"Why should I cry off? It is a good piece of business, but it takes some time to realize, like everything that is safe. My fifty thousand francs are lying at the bank; the last installment of five thousand francs for my business was paid in yesterday. As for the Ragons, they are putting all that they have into it."

"Why, how do they live?"

"Never mind; they live, at all events."

"I understand you, uncle," said Birotteau, deeply touched, and he grasped the austere old man's hands tightly in his.

"What are you going to do about this business?" Pillerault asked abruptly.

"I shall take three-eighths; you and the Ragons will take an eighth between you; I shall credit you with the amount in my books until they decide the question of the deeds."

"Good! Are you so very rich, my boy, that you pay down three hundred thousand francs? It looks to me as though you were risking a good deal of money outside your business; won't the business suffer? After all, it is your own affair. If you are pulled up, here are the funds at ninety; I could sell out two thousand francs in consols. Take care, though, my

boy; if you come to me you will be laying hands on your girl's fortune."

"Uncle, you say the kindest things as if they were a matter of course; it goes to my heart to hear you."

"General Foy touched me after another fashion just now! There, at all events, it is settled. The building lots won't fly away; we shall have them for half their value; and, even if we should have to wait six years, there will still be something in the way of interest; lumber yards would pay rent, so we cannot lose. There is only one thing, and that is impossible—Roguin will not run away with our capital——"

"But that is what my wife said last night; she is afraid——"

"That Roguin will run off with our money," said Pillerault, laughing; "and why?"

"Well, she says she doesn't like the cut of his features; and, like all men who cannot have women, he is frantic for——"

An incredulous smile stole over Pillerault's face; he tore a leaf out of a little book, filled in the amount, and signed his name.

"Here, this is an order on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, for Ragon's share and mine. Those poor people, though, to make up the money, sold out their fifteen shares in the Wortschin mines to your worthless rogue of a du Tillet. Good people in sore straits; it goes to one's heart to see it. And such good people they are, such noble people, the flower of the old-fashioned bourgeoisie, in fact! Their brother Popinot, the judge, knows nothing about it; they are hiding their affairs from him, lest they should hinder him from giving free course to his benevolence. People who have worked as I did for thirty years——"

"God grant that the Comagen Oil succeeds!" cried Birotteau, "and I shall be doubly pleased. Good-day, uncle; you are coming to dine with us on Sunday with the Ragons and Roguin; and Monsieur Claparon is coming, for we are all

going to sign the papers the day after to-morrow; to-morrow will be Friday, and I don't want to do bus——"

"Do you really believe in those superstitions?"

"I shall never believe that the day when the Son of God was put to death by men can be a lucky day, uncle. Why? —people stop all business even on the 21st of January."

"Good-by till Sunday," said Pillerault abruptly.

"If it weren't for his political opinions," said Birotteau to himself, as he went downstairs again, "I do not know where they would find his equal here below. What are politics to him? He would get on very nicely without thinking of them at all. His infatuation shows that no one is perfect. Three o'clock already!" said César, as he entered his store.

"Are you going to take these bills, sir?" asked Célestin, holding out the umbrella-dealer's collection of bills.

"Yes, at six per cent., no commission. Wife, put out all my things ready for me; I am going to call on Monsieur Vauquelin, you know why. Above all things, a white cravat."

Birotteau gave some orders to his assistants; he did not see Popinot, guessed that his future partner had gone to dress for the visit, and went up at once to his own room, where the Dresden Madonna met his eyes in a magnificent frame, according to his orders.

"Well, it looks fine, doesn't it?"

"Why, papa, say it is beautiful, or people will laugh at you."

"Here is a girl for you that scolds her father!—— Well, for my own part, I like 'Hero and Leander' quite as much. The 'Madonna' is a religious subject, which could be hung up in an oratory; but 'Hero and Leander!' Ah! I will buy it, for the flask of oil suggested some ideas to me."

"But I don't understand, papa."

"Virginie, call a cab!" shouted César, in a voice that rang through the house. He had finished shaving, and the shy Anselme Popinot appeared, dragging his feet, for he

thought of Césarine. He had not discovered, as yet, that he was not lame in the eyes of his lady-love, a sweet proof of love, which only those to whom fate has given some bodily deformity can receive.

"The press will be in working order to-morrow, sir," he said.

"Very well. What is the matter, Popinot?" asked César, seeing Anselme's flushed face.

"I am so glad, sir; I have found a place, a front and back store, and a kitchen, and the rooms above, and a wareroom, all for twelve hundred francs a year, in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

"We must have an eighteen years' lease of it," said Birotteau. "But let us go to Monsieur Vauquelin and we can talk on the way," and César and Popinot drove away under the eyes of the assistants, who were at a loss what to think of such magnificent attire and so unusual a portent as a cab, ignorant as they were of the mighty matters that occupied the owner of the Queen of Roses.

"So we shall soon know the truth about the hazelnuts!" said the perfumer.

"Hazelnuts?" queried Popinot.

"You have my secret, Popinot," said the perfumer; "I let slip the word 'hazelnuts,' and that tells everything. Hazelnut oil is the only oil which produces any effect on the hair; no other house has thought of it. When I saw the print of 'Hero and Leander,' I said to myself, 'If the ancients put so much oil on their heads, there must have been some reason for it,' for the ancients are the ancients! In spite of modern pretensions, I am of Boileau's opinion about the ancients. From that I came to the idea of hazelnuts, thanks to young Bianchon, the medical student, your relative; he told me that the students at the École put hazelnut oil on their mustaches and whiskers to make them grow. All we want now is the illustrious Monsieur Vauquelin's approval.

Enlightened by him, we shall not deceive the public. Only just now I was over in the market buying the raw material of a saleswoman there; and in another moment I shall be in the presence of one of the greatest scientific men in France for the quintessence of the matter. There's sense in proverbs—extremes meet. Trade is the intermediary between vegetable products and science, you see, my boy. Angélique Madou collects the material, Vauquelin distills it, and we sell an essence. Hazelnuts are worth five sous the pound, Monsieur Vauquelin will increase their value a hundredfold, and we shall perhaps do a service to humanity; for, if vanity is a plague of man, a good cosmetic is a benefit."

The devout admiration with which Popinot listened to the father of his Césarine stimulated Birotteau's eloquence; he indulged in the crudest rhetorical display that a Philistine's brain can devise.

"Be reverent, Anselme," he said, as they reached the street in which Vauquelin lived; "we are about to enter the sanctuary of science. Put the 'Madonna' in evidence, but without making any parade of it, on a chair in the dining-room. If only I can manage to say what I want to say without making a muddle of it!" cried Birotteau artlessly. "Popinot, that man produces a chemical effect on me, the sound of his voice makes me quite hot inside, and even gives me a slight colic. He is my benefactor, Anselme, and in a few minutes he will be your benefactor too."

Popinot turned cold at the words, set down his feet as if he were treading on eggs, and looked uneasily around the room.

M. Vauquelin was in his study when Birotteau was announced. The man of science knew that the perfumer was a deputy-mayor and in high favor; he received his visitor.

"So you do not forget me now that you are so high up in the world," he said; "well, between a chemist and a perfumer there is but a hand's-breadth."

"Alas! there is a great distance between your genius and a plain man like me, sir; and, as for what you call 'being high up in the world,' it is all owing to you, and I shall never forget it in this world or the next."

"Oh! in the next we shall all be equal, they say, cobblers and kings."

"That is to say, those kings and cobblers who have lived piously," remarked Birotteau.

"Is this your son?" asked Vauquelin, looking at little Popinot, who was beyond expression amazed to find nothing extraordinary in the study. He had expected to see prodigious marvels, giant engines, vivified substances, and metals flying about.

"No, sir; but he is a young man in whom I am very much interested, and he has come to entreat your goodness, which is equal to your talent, and is it not infinite?" remarked Birotteau diplomatically. "We have come, after an interval of sixteen years, to consult you a second time on a matter of importance, concerning which I am as ignorant as a perfumer."

"Let us hear about it. What is it?"

"I know that the subject of hair occupies your nights, and that you are devoting yourself to the analysis of the substance! While you have been thinking for glory, I have been thinking, too, for trade."

"Dear Monsieur Birotteau, what do you want of me—an analysis of hair?"

He took up a loose sheet.

"I am about to read a paper before the Académie des Sciences," he went on. "Hair is composed of a somewhat large proportion of mucus, a little colorless oil, a larger proportion of dark-greenish oil, and iron; I find a certain amount of oxide of manganese, and of phosphate of lime, and traces of carbonate of lime, and silica; sulphur enters largely into its composition. The proportions in which these different

substances are present vary, and so cause the different colorings of hair. Red hair, for example, on analysis yields much more of the dark-green oil than the other kinds give."

César and Popinot opened their eyes ludicrously wide.

"Nine things," cried Birotteau. "What, are there metals and oils in hair? It takes the word of a man like you, whom I venerate, to make me believe it. How extraordinary! God is great, M. Vauquelin."

"Hair is produced by a follicular organ," the great chemist continued; "a follicle is a sort of bag open at both ends; at the one end it is connected with nerves and bloodvessels, and the hair issues from the other. According to some of our learned associates, one of whom is Monsieur de Blainville, the hair is dead matter expelled from the sac or secreting gland, which is full of a pulpy tissue."

"It is like perspiration in sticks, as you might say," cried Popinot, for which the perfumer promptly kicked his shins.

Vauquelin smiled at Popinot's notion. On this, "He has capacity, hasn't he?" said César, looking at Popinot. "But if hair is dead, to begin with, sir, you can't possibly restore it, and it is all over with us! the prospectus is nonsense! You don't know how funny the public is; you can't go and tell people——"

"That there is a rubbish heap on their heads," said Popinot, trying to make Vauquelin laugh again.

"An aerial catacomb," returned the chemist, keeping up the joke.

"And the nuts that are bought!" cried Birotteau, with a lively sense of the pecuniary loss. "But why do they sell such——?"

"Reassure yourself," said Vauquelin, smiling. "I see some secret for preventing the hair from falling out or turning gray is the matter in question. Listen; here are my conclusions after all my researches."

Popinot pricked up his ears at this like a startled leveret.

"The blanching of the fibres, dead or alive, is, in my opinion, produced by an interruption of the secretion of the coloring matter; this theory would explain the fact that some fur-bearing animals in cold climates turn white, or some lighter color, at the beginning of winter."

"Hm! Popinot."

"It is evident," Vauquelin continued, "that the change of color is due to sudden change in the temperature of the circumambient air——"

"Circumambient, Popinot—mind that! mind that!" cried César.

"Yes," said Vauquelin, "to alternations of cold or heat, or to interior phenomena, which produce the same effect. So, in all probability, headaches and other local affections dissipate the fluid or derange the secretions. The inside of the head is the doctors' province. As for the outside, put on your cosmetics by all means."

"Well, sir," said Birotteau, "now I can breathe again after what you say. I thought of selling the oil of hazelnuts, remembering the use the ancients made of oil for their hair; and the ancients are the ancients, I am of Boileau's opinion. Why did wrestlers oil themselves——?"

"Olive oil would do quite as well as oil of hazelnuts," said Vauquelin, who had paid no attention to Birotteau's remarks. "Any oil will do to protect the hair-bulbs from outside influences injurious to the substances which it contains in process of formation; in course of deposit, we chemists would say. Perhaps you are right; the essential oil of hazelnuts is an irritant, so Dupuytren once told me. I will try to find out the difference between walnut and beechnut oils, colza, olive, and so forth."

"Then I am not mistaken," Birotteau exclaimed triumphantly, "and a great man bears me out in my opinion. Macassar is done for! Macassar, sir, is a cosmetic they give you, that is, sell you, and sell very dear, to make your hair grow."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Vauquelin, "there are not two ounces of oil of Macassar in Europe. Oil of Macassar produces not the slightest effect on hair. The Malays will pay its weight in gold for it, because of its supposed preservative action on the hair, not knowing that whale oil is quite as good. No possible power whether chemical or divine——"

"Oh! divine—do not say that, Monsieur Vauquelin."

"Why, my dear sir, God's first law is conformity with Himself; without unity there is no power——"

"Oh, looked at in that way——"

"No power whatever can make the hair grow on a bald head, and you cannot dye white or red hair without danger; but you will do no harm, and there will be no fraud in extolling your oil, and I think that those who use it might preserve their hair."

"Do you think that the Royal Academy of Science would approve it?"

"Oh! it is no discovery," said M. Vauquelin. "And, beside, quacks have taken the name of the Academy in vain so often that it would not help you at all. My conscience will not allow me to look on oil of hazelnuts as a prodigy."

"What would be the best way of extracting it, by pressure or by decoction?" asked Birotteau.

"You will obtain the most oil by pressure between two hot plates; but if the plates are cold, it will be of better quality. It ought to be applied to the skin itself, and not rubbed into the hair," continued Vauquelin very good-naturedly, "or the effect will be lost."

"Mind you remember this, Popinot," said Birotteau, as his face flushed up with enthusiasm. "You see in him, sir, a young man who will reckon this day among the great days of his life. He knew and revered you before he had seen you. Ah! we often talk of you at home; a name that is always in the heart comes often to the lips. We pray every day for

you, my wife and daughter and I, as we ought to do for our benefactor."

"It is too much for so little," said Vauquelin, embarrassed by the perfumer's voluble gratitude.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Birotteau. "You cannot hinder us from loving you, you who will accept nothing from me. You are like the sun; you shed light around you, and those on whom it shines can do nothing for you in return."

The man of science rose, smiling, to his feet; Birotteau and Anselme Popinot rose also.

"Look around, Anselme; take a good look at this study. If you will allow him, sir? Your time is so valuable, perhaps he will never come here again."

"Well, are you satisfied with your business?" asked Vauquelin, turning to Birotteau; "for, after all, we are both of us men of business——"

"Pretty well, sir," said Birotteau, going toward the dining-room, whither Vauquelin followed him; "but it will take a great deal of capital to start this oil under the name of Comagen Essence——"

"'Essence' and 'Comagen' are two words that clash. Call your cosmetic Birotteau's Oil; or, if you have no mind to blaze your name abroad, take another—— Why, there is the Dresden Madonna—— Ah! Monsieur Birotteau, you mean us to fall out at parting."

"Monsieur Vauquelin," said the perfumer, taking both the chemist's hands in his, "the scarce print has no value save for the persistent efforts which I have made to find it; all Germany has been ransacked for a proof before letters on India paper; I knew you wished to have it, you were too busy to procure it yourself, so I have taken it upon myself to be your agent. Please accept, not a paltry print, but the earnest efforts, the care, and pains which prove a boundless devotion. I should have been glad if you had wanted some substances that could only be found in the depths of an abyss,

that I might come to tell you, 'Here they are!' We have so many chances to be forgotten, let me put myself, my wife, and daughter, and the son-in-law whom I shall have one day, all before your eyes; and say to yourself when you see the Madonna, 'There are honest folk who think of me.'"

"I accept it," said Vauquelin.

Popinot and Birotteau wiped their eyes, so much moved were they by the kind tone in which the chemist spoke.

"Will you carry your kindness yet further?" asked the perfumer.

"What is it?" asked Vauquelin.

"I am inviting a few of my friends—(here he raised himself on tiptoe, but his face assumed a humble expression)—partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor."

"Aha!" said Vauquelin in astonishment.

"It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's church on the 13th of Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. My wife is giving a ball on Sunday in twenty days' time; will you come to it, sir? Do us the honor of dining with us on that day; and, for my own part, it will be as if they had given me the cross twice. I will write to you in good time."

"Very well, yes," said Vauquelin.

"My heart is swelling with pleasure," cried the perfumer when they were in the street. "He will come to my house! I am afraid that I have forgotten what he said about hair; do you remember it, Popinot?"

"Yes, sir, and in twenty years' time I shall still remember it."

"A great man, that he is! What insight and what penetration!" exclaimed Birotteau. "He went straight to the point, he read our thoughts at once, and showed us how to

make a clean sweep of Macassar Oil. Ah! nothing can make hair grow, Macassar, so that is a lie! Popinot, there is a fortune within our grasp. So let us be at the factory by seven o'clock to-morrow morning, the nuts will come in, and we will make the oil. There is no use in his saying that any oil will do; it would be all over with us if the public knew that. If there were not a little hazelnut oil and scent in this composition of ours, what excuse should we have for selling it at three or four francs for as many ounces?"

"And you are to be decorated, sir?" said Popinot. "What glory for——"

"For commerce, isn't it, my boy?"

César Birotteau, sure of a fortune, looked so triumphant that the assistants noticed his expression and made signs to each other; for the appearance of a cab, and the fact that their employer and his cashier had changed their clothes, had given rise to the wildest imaginings. The very evident satisfaction of the pair, revealed by the diplomatic glances exchanged between them, and the hopeful eyes that Popinot turned once or twice on Césarine, announced that some important event was imminent, and confirmed the assistants' suspicions. The smallest chance events in their busy and almost monastic lives were as interesting to them as to any prisoner in solitary confinement. Mme. César's face (for she responded doubtfully to the Olympian looks her husband turned on her) portended some new development in the business, for at any other time Mme. César would have been serenely content—Mme. César, who was so blithe over a good day, and to-day the takings had amounted to the extraordinary sum of six thousand francs; some old outstanding accounts had been paid.

The dining-room and the kitchen were both on the mezzanine floor, where César and Constance had lived during the first years of their married life. This dining-room, where their honeymoon had been spent, looked like a little drawing-

room. The kitchen windows looked out into a little yard; a passage separated the two rooms and gave access to the staircase, contrived in a corner of the back-shop.

Raguet, the errand boy, looked after the store while they sat at dinner; but, when dessert appeared, the assistants went downstairs again and left César and his wife and daughter to finish their meal by the fireside. This tradition had been handed down from the days of the Ragons, who had kept up all the old-fashioned customs and usages in full vigor, and set the same enormous distance between themselves and the assistants that formerly existed between masters and apprentices. Césarine or Constance would then prepare the cup of coffee, which the perfumer took in a low chair by the fire. It was the hour when César told his wife all the small news of the day; he would tell her anything that he had seen in Paris, or what they were doing in the Faubourg du Temple, and about the difficulties that arose there.

"This is certainly one of the most memorable days in our lives, wife!" he began, when the assistants had gone downstairs. "The hazelnuts have been bought, the hydraulic press will be ready for work to-morrow, the matter of the building lands has been concluded. And, while I think of it, just put away this order on the bank," he went on, handing over to her Pillerault's draft. "The redecoration of the rooms, our new rooms, has been settled. Dear me! I saw a very queer man to-day in the Cour Batave!"

And he told the women about M. Molineux.

"I see," his wife broke in, in the middle of a tirade, "that you will have to pay two hundred thousand francs!"

"True, my wife," said the perfumer, with mock humility. "Good Lord! and how are we to pay it? for the building lands near the Madeleine, that will be the finest quarter of Paris some day, must be taken as worth nothing."

"Some day, César."

"Dear, dear!" he continued his joke—"my three-eighths

will only be worth a million in six years' time. And how shall we pay two hundred thousand francs?" asked César, making as though he were aghast. "Well, we will pay it with this," and he drew from his pocket one of Mme. Madou's hazelnuts, which he had carefully kept.

He held it up between his thumb and finger. Constance said nothing; but Césarine, whose curiosity was tickled, brought her father his cup of coffee with a "Come, now, papa, are you joking?"

The perfumer, like his assistants, had noticed the glances Popinot had given Césarine during dinner; he meant to clear up his suspicions.

"Well, little girl, this hazelnut is to work a revolution in the house. There will be one less under our roof after to-night."

Césarine looked straight at her father, as who should say, "What is that to me?"

"Popinot is going away."

Although César was a poor observer, although his remark had been meant to prepare the way for the announcement of the new firm of A. Popinot and Company, as well as for a trap for his daughter, his father's tenderness told him the secret of the vague emotions which sprang up in the girl's heart, and blossomed in red upon her cheek and brow, brightening her eyes before they fell. César thought at once that some word had been exchanged between Césarine and Popinot. Nothing of the kind had happened; the boy and girl understood each other, after the fashion of shy young lovers, without a word.

There are moralists who hold that love is the most involuntary, the most disinterested and least calculating of all passions, a mother's love always excepted, a doctrine which contains a gross error. The larger part of mankind may be ignorant of their motives; but any sympathy, physical or mental, is none the less based upon calculations made by brain or heart or

animal instincts. Love is essentially an egoistical affection, and egoism implies profound calculation. For the order of mind which is only impressed by outward and visible results, it may seem an improbable or unusual thing that a poor, lame, red-haired lad should find favor in the eyes of a beautiful girl like Césarine; and yet it was only what might be expected from the workings of the bourgeois mind in matters of sentiment. The explanation would account for other marriages that are a constant source of amazement to onlookers, between tall or beautiful women and insignificant men, or when some well-grown stripling marries some ugly little creature.

For a man afflicted with any physical deformity, be it a club-foot, lameness, a hunch-back, excessive ugliness, spot, blemish, or disfigurement, Roguin's infirmity, or other anomalous affection for which his progenitors are not responsible, there are but two courses open: he must either make himself feared or cultivate an exquisite goodness—he cannot afford to steer an undecided middle course between the two extremes like the rest of humanity. The first alternative requires talent, genius, or force of character; for a man can only inspire terror by his power to do harm, impose respect by his genius, or compel fear by his prodigious wit. In the second he studies to be adored; he lends himself admirably to feminine tyranny, and is wiser in love than others of irreproachable physical proportions.

Anselme Popinet had been brought up by the good Ragons, upright citizens of the best type, and by his uncle the judge—a course of training which, with his ingenuous and religious nature, had led him to redeem his slight deformity by the perfection of his character. Constance and César, struck by a disposition which makes youth so attractive, had often praised Anselme in Césarine's hearing. With all their narrowness in other respects, this storekeeper and his wife possessed nobility of soul, and hearts that were quick to

comprehend. Their praises found an echo in the girl's own heart; in spite of her inexperience she read in Anselme's frank eyes a passion that is always flattering, no matter what the age, rank, or figure of the lover may be.

Little Popinot, not being a well-shaped man, had all the more reasons for loving a woman. Should she be fair, he would be her lover till his dying day; love would give him ambition; he would work himself to death to make his wife happy; he would suffer her to be the sovereign mistress of his home; and her empire over him would be without change and boundless.

This, crudely stated, is perhaps what Césarine thought, unconsciously within herself; she had had a bird's-eye glimpse of the harvests of love, and she had drawn her own inferences; her mother's happiness was under her eyes, she wished no other life for herself; instinctively she discerned in Anselme another César, polished by education, as she herself had been. In her dreams, Popinot was the mayor of an arrondissement, and she liked to imagine herself asking for subscriptions to charities in her district, as her own mother did in the parish of Saint-Roch. And so at length she forgot that one of Popinot's legs was shorter than the other, and would have been quite capable of asking, "Does he really limp?" She liked the clear eyes; she liked to see the change that came over them when, at a glance from her, they lighted up at once with a flash of timid love, and then fell despondently again.

Roguin's head clerk, Alexandre Crottat, gifted with a precocious knowledge of the world, acquired by professional experience, disgusted Césarine with his half-cynical, half-good-natured air, after putting her out of patience with his commonplace talk. Popinot's silence revealed a gentle nature; she liked to watch the half-sad smile with which he endured meaningless trivialities; the babble which made him

smile always roused a feeling of annoyance in her; they smiled or looked condolence at each other.

Anselme's mental superiority did not prevent him from working hard with his hands; the way in which he threw himself into everything that he did also pleased Césarine; she guessed that while all the other assistants said, "Césarine is going to be married to Monsieur Roguin's head clerk," Anselme, lame and poor and red-haired, did not despair of winning her. The strength of a hope proves the strength of a love.

"Where is he going?" Césarine asked, trying to look indifferent.

"He is going to set up for himself in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants! And, upon my word, by the grace of God!——" But neither his wife nor daughter understood the ejaculation. When Birotteau's mind encountered any difficulty, he behaved like an insect that encounters an obstacle, he swerved to left or right; so now he changed the subject, promising himself to speak of Césarine to his wife.

"I told uncle your notions about Roguin and your fears; he began to laugh," he went on, addressing Constance.

"You ought never to repeat things that we say between ourselves," she cried. "Poor Roguin! he may be the most honest man in the world; he is fifty-eight years old, and I expect he no more thinks——"

She too broke off; she saw that Césarine was listening, and warned César of that fact by a glance.

"So I did well to strike the bargain."

"Why, you are the master," returned she.

César took both his wife's hands in his and kissed her on the forehead. That answer had always been her passive form of assent to her husband's projects. And, with that, Birotteau went downstairs into the store.

"Come!" he cried, speaking to the assistants, "we will put up the shutters at ten o'clock. We must do a stroke of

work, gentlemen! We must set about moving all the furniture from the second floor to the third to-night! We shall have to put the little pots into the big ones, as the saying is, so as to give my architect elbow-room to-morrow. Popinot has gone out without leave," said César, looking round. "Oh! I forgot, he does not sleep here. He has gone to see about the store, or else he is putting down Monsieur Vauquelin's ideas," he thought.

"We know why the furniture is being moved, sir," said Célestin, spokesman for the two assistants and Raguet, who stood by him. "May we be allowed to congratulate you on an honor which reflects glory on the whole establishment? Popinot told us——"

"Well, boys, it can't be helped; I have been decorated. So we are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal and by fighting for the Royalist cause—when I was your age—on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire; and, on my word, Napoleon the Emperor, as they called him, gave me my wound. For I was wounded, and on the thigh, what is more, and Madame Ragon nursed me. Be brave, and you will be rewarded! So there, you see, my children, that a mishap is never all loss."

"People don't fight in the streets nowadays," said Célestin.

"Well, we must hope," said César, and thereupon he took occasion to read his assistants a little homily, which he rounded off with an invitation.

The prospect of a dance put new life into the three assistants; under the stimulus of the excitement, the three, with Virginie and Raguet, performed acrobatic feats. They came and went up and down the stairs with their loads, and nothing was broken, nothing was upset. By two o'clock in the morn-

ing the removal was accomplished; César and his wife slept on the third floor, Célestin and the second assistant occupied Popinot's room. The fourth floor was converted, for the time being, into a furniture warehouse.

When the assistants had gone down into the shop after dinner, Popinot, usually so quiet and equable, had been as fidgety as a race-horse just arrived upon the course. A burning desire to do something great was upon him, induced by a superabundance of nervous fluid, which turns the diaphragm of the lover or the man of restless ambition into a furnace.

"What can be the matter with you?" Célestin had asked.

"What a day! I am setting up for myself, my dear fellow," he whispered in Célestin's ear, "and Monsieur César is to be decorated."

"You are very lucky; the governor is helping you," exclaimed the assistant.

Popinot gave him no answer; he vanished, whirled away by the wind—the wind of success.

"Oh, as to lucky!" said an assistant, as he sorted gloves in dozens, to his neighbor, who was busy checking the prices on the tickets. "The governor has seen the eyes that Popinot has been making at Mademoiselle Césarine; he is a shrewd one, the governor, so he is getting rid of Anselme; it would be difficult to refuse outright, because of the relatives. Célestin takes the trick by this generosity."

Anselme Popinot meanwhile had turned down the Rue Saint-Honoré and hurried along the Rue des Deux-Écus to secure some one in whom his commercial second-sight beheld the principal instrument of success. Judge Popinot had once done a service to this young man, the cleverest commercial traveler in Paris, whose activity and triumphant gift of the gab was to earn for him at a later day the title of "The Illustrious." At this time the great commercial traveler was devoting his energies to the hat-trade and the "fancy-goods line;" he was simply Gaudissart as yet, without the prefix, but at the age of

twenty-two he had already distinguished himself; his magnetic influence upon customers was beginning to be recognized. He was thin and bright-eyed at that time; he had an eloquent face, an indefatigable memory, a quick perception of the taste of those with whom he came in contact; he deserved to be, what he afterward became—the king of commercial travelers, the Frenchman *par excellence.*

Popinot had come across Gaudissart some days previously, and the latter had announced that he was about to go on a journey; the hope of finding him still in Paris had sent Popinot flying down the Rue des Deux-Écus. At the coach-office he learned that the commercial traveler had taken his place. Gaudissart's leave-taking of his beloved city had taken the shape of an evening at the Vaudeville, where there was a new play. Popinot resolved to wait for him. To confide the agency of the hazelnut oil to this invaluable launcher of commercial enterprise, already courted and cherished by the best houses, was exactly like drawing a bill of exchange on fortune!

Popinot had claims on Gaudissart. The commercial traveler, so skilled in the art of entangling that forward race, the petty country storekeepers, in his toils, had once allowed himself to become entangled in a political web, in the first conspiracy against the Bourbons after the Hundred Days; and Gaudissart, to whom open air was a vital necessity, found himself in prison with a capital charge hanging over him. Judge Popinot, the examining magistrate, saw that it was a piece of youthful folly that implicated Gaudissart in the affair, and set him at liberty; but if the young man had chanced upon a magistrate eager to commend himself to the authorities, or upon a rabid Royalist, the luckless pioneer of commerce might have mounted the scaffold. Gaudissart, who knew that he owed his life to the judge, was in despair, because a barren gratitude was all the return he could make; and, as it was impossible to thank a judge for doing justice,

he had betaken himself to the Ragons, and there sworn fealty to the family of Popinot.

While Popinot waited he naturally spent the time in going to see his store in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants once more. He asked for the landlord's address, so as to come to terms with him about the lease. Then, wandering through the murky labyrinth about the Great Market, with his thoughts full of ways and means of making a rapid fortune, Popinot came into the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, and there met with a wonderful and auspicious opportunity, with which César's heart should be gladdened on the morrow. Then he took up his post at the door of the Hôtel du Commerce, at the end of the Rue des Deux-Écus; and toward midnight heard, afar off, a voice uplifted in the Rue de Grenelle; it was Gaudissart singing a bit of the last song in the piece, to the accompaniment of the sound of a walking-stick, trailed with expression upon the pavement.

"Sir," cried Anselme, suddenly emerging from the doorway, "can I have a couple of words with you?"

"Eleven, if you like," said the other, raising a loaded cane.

"I am Popinot," said poor Anselme.

"Right," said Gaudissart, recognizing his friend. "What do you want? Money? Absent on leave, but there is some somewhere. An arm for a duel? I am at your service from heel to head.

"'You see him where he stands—
Every inch a Frenchman and a soldier!'"

"Come and have ten minutes' talk with me, not in your room, we might be overheard, but on the Quai de l'Horloge; there is nobody there at this time of night," said Popinot, "it is a question of the greatest importance."

"You are in a hurry, are you? Come along!"

Ten minutes later, Gaudissart, now put in possession of Popinot's secrets, recognized the importance of the matter.

"Approach, ye hairdressers and retail perfumers," cried Gaudissart, mimicking Lafon in the Cid. "I will get hold of all the perfumers of France and Navarre. Oh! I have it! I was going away, but I shall stop here now and take agencies from the Parisian perfumery trade."

"Why?"

"To choke off your competitors, innocent! By taking on their agencies, I can make their perfidious cosmetics drink to their own confusion in your oil, for I shall talk of nothing else and push no other kind. A fine commercial traveler's dodge! Aha! we are the diplomatists of commerce. Famous! As for your prospectus, I will see to it. I have known Andoche Finot since we were boys; his father is a hatter in the Rue du Coq, the old fellow started me; it was through him that I began to travel in the hat line. Andoche is a very clever fellow; he has the cleverness of all the heads that his father ever fitted with hats. He is in the literary line; he does the minor theatres for the 'Courrier des Spectacles.' His father, an old fox, has abundant reason for not liking cleverness; he doesn't believe in cleverness; it is impossible to make him see that cleverness will sell, and that a young man of spirit can make a fortune by his wits; indeed, as to spirit, the only spirit he approves of is proof-spirit. Old Finot is reducing young Finot by famine. Andoche can do anything, and he is my friend, moreover, and I don't rub against fools (except in the way of business). Finot does mottoes for the 'Fidèle Berger,' which pays him, while the newspapers, for which he works like a galley-slave, snub him right and left. How jealous they are in that line! It is just like it is in the fancy article trade.

"Finot wrote a splendid one-act comedy for Mademoiselle Mars, the greatest of the great. (Ah! there's a woman that I admire!) Well, and to see it put on the stage at all, he had to take it to the Gaîté. Andoche understands prospectuses; he enters into a man's ideas about business, he is not proud,

he will block out our prospectus *gratis*. Goodness! we will treat him to a bowl of punch and little cakes; for no nonsense, Popinot; I will travel for you without commission or expenses; your competitors shall pay me, I will bamboozle them. Let us understand each other clearly. The success of this thing is a point of honor with me; my reward shall be to be best-man at your wedding! I will go to Italy, Germany, and England! I will take placards in every language with me and have them posted up everywhere, in the villages, at church-doors, and in all good situations that I know in country towns! The oil shall make a blaze; it shall be on every head! Ah! your marriage will not be a marriage in water-colors; it shall be done in oils! You shall have your Césarine, or I am not 'The Illustrious,' a nickname old Finot gave me because I made a success of his gray hats. I shall be sticking to my own line, too, the human head; oil and hats, as is well known, are meant to preserve the hair of the public."

Popinot went to his aunt's house, where he was to spend the night, in such a fever, brought on by visions of success, that the streets seemed to him to be rivers of oil. He scarcely slept at all, dreamed that his hair was growing at a furious rate, and beheld two angels, who unrolled above his head a scroll (as in a pantomime), whereon the words "Cesarian Oil" were written; and he awoke, but remembered his dream, and determined to give the name to the oil of hazelnuts. He saw the will of heaven revealed in this fancy.

César and Popinot were both at the factory in the Faubourg du Temple long before the hazelnuts arrived. While they waited for Mme. Madou's porters, Popinot in high-glee told the whole history of his treaty of alliance with Gaudissart the Great.

"We have the illustrious Gaudissart for us; we shall be millionaires!" cried the perfumer, holding out a hand to his

cashier, with the air of Louis XIV. receiving a Maréchal de Villairs after Denain.

"And yet another thing," said the happy assistant, drawing a bottle from his pocket, a gourd-shaped flask, flattened so as to present several sides. "I have found ten thousand bottles like this one, ready made and washed, at four sous and six months' credit."

"Anselme," said Birotteau, beholding this marvel, "yesterday" (here his voice grew solemn), "yesterday, in the garden of the Tuileries—yes, no longer ago than yesterday—your words to me were, 'I shall succeed.' To-day I myself say to you, 'You will succeed!' Four sous! Six months! An entirely new shape! Macassar is shaking in his shoes; what a death-blow for Macassar! What a good thing that I have bought up all the nuts I could lay my hands on in Paris! But where did you find these bottles?"

"I was waiting to speak to Gaudissart, and sauntering about——"

"Just as I once did!" exclaimed Birotteau.

"And as I went down the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, I saw a wholesale glass-merchant's place, a dealer in bell-glasses and glass shades, who has a very large stock; I saw this bottle—— Oh! it stared me in the face like a flash of light; something said, 'Here is the thing for you!'"

"A born merchant! He shall have my daughter," muttered César.

"In I went, and saw thousands of the bottles standing there in boxes."

"Did you ask him about them?"

"You do not think me such a ninny!" cried Anselme, grieved at the thought.

"Born merchant!" repeated Birotteau.

"I went in to ask for glass shades for little wax statuettes. While I was bargaining for the glass shades, I found fault with the shape of these bottles. That led to a general confession;

my bottle merchant went from one thing to another, and told me that Faille and Bouchot, who failed lately, were about to bring out a cosmetic, and wanted an out-of-the-way shape. He distrusted them; he wanted half the money down; Faille and Bouchot, hoping for a success, parted with the money, and the failure came out while the bottles were being made. When they put in a claim to the trustees for the rest, the trustees compromised the matter by leaving them with all the bottles and half the money that had been paid, as an indemnity for goods which they said were absurdly shaped and impossible to dispose of. The bottles cost him eight sous, and he would be glad to let any one have them for four. He might have them on his hands for heaven knew how long; there was no sale for such a shape. 'Will you engage to supply ten thousand at four sous? I can take the bottles off your hands; I am Monsieur Birotteau's assistant.' And so I opened up the subject, and drew him out, led him on, and put pressure on my man, and he is ours."

"Four sous!" said Birotteau. "Do you know that we can bring out the oil at three francs, and make thirty sous, leaving twenty to the retailers?"

"The Cesarian Oil!" cried Popinot.

"Cesarian Oil?—— Ah, master lover, you have a mind to flatter father and daughter. Very well; let it be Cesarian Oil if you like. The Cæsars conquered the world; they must have had famous heads of hair."

"Cæsar was bald," said Popinot.

"Because he did not use our oil, people will say. The Cesarian Oil at three francs; Macassar Oil costs twice as much. Gaudissart is in it; we shall make a hundred thousand francs a year, for we will set down all heads that respect themselves for a dozen bottles every twelvemonth; eighteen francs of profit! Say there are eighteen thousand heads—a hundred and forty-four thousand francs. We shall be millionaires."

When the hazelnuts arrived, Raguet and the work-people,

with Popinot and César, cracked the shells, and a sufficient quantity was pressed. In four hours' time they had several pounds weight of oil. Popinot took some of it to Vauquelin, who presented him with a formula for diluting the essential oil with a less expensive medium and for perfuming it. Popinot straightway took steps for taking out a patent for the invention and the improvement. It was Popinot's ambition to pay his share of the expense of starting the enterprise, and the devoted Gaudissart lent the money for the deposit.

Prosperity has an intoxicating effect, which always turns weak heads. One result of this uplifted state of mind is readily foreseen. Grindot came. He brought with him a sketch in water-colors of a charming interior, the design for the future rooms when furnished. Birotteau was carried away by it. He agreed to everything, and the workmen began at once; every stroke of the pickaxe drew groans from the house and from Constance. The painter, M. Lourdois, a very wealthy contractor, who engaged to leave nothing undone, talked of gilding the drawing-room. Constance interposed at this.

"Monsieur Lourdois," said she, "you have thirty thousand francs a year of your own; you live in your own house, and you can do what you like in it; but for people like us——"

"Madame, commerce ought to shine; it should not suffer itself to be eclipsed by the aristocracy. Beside, here is Monsieur Birotteau in the Government; he is a public man——"

"Yes, but he is still in the store," said Constance aloud, before the assistants and her five auditors; "neither he, nor I, nor his friends, nor his enemies will forget that."

Birotteau raised himself on tiptoe several times, with his hands clasped behind his back.

"My wife is right," said he. "We will be modest in prosperity. Beside, so long as a man is in business, he ought to be careful of his expenses and to keep them within bounds; indeed, he is bound by law not to indulge in 'ex-

cessive expenditure.' If the enlargement of my premises and the amount spent on the alterations exceed a certain limit, it would be imprudent in me to go beyond it; you yourself would blame me, Lourdois. The quarter has its eyes upon me; successful people are looked upon jealously and envied. Ah! you will soon know that, young man," he said, addressing Grindot; "if they slander us, at any rate let us give them no cause to say evil of us."

"Neither slander nor spite can touch you," said Lourdois; "your position makes an exception of you; and you have had such a great experience of business that you know how to always keep your affairs within due limits. You are very shrewd, monsieur."

"I have had some experience of business it is true; do you know the reason why we are enlarging our house? If I exact a heavy penalty to secure punctuality it is——"

"No."

"Well, then, my wife and I are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

"What, what?" cried Lourdois. "Have they given you the cross?"

"Yes. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the 13th of Vendémiaire at Saint-Roch, when I was wounded by Napoleon. Will you come and bring your wife and your young lady——?"

"Enchanted by the honor you condescend to bestow upon me," said Lourdois, a Liberal. "But you are a droll fellow, Birotteau; you mean to make sure that I shall keep my word, and that is why you ask me to come. Well, well; I will set my best workmen on to it; we will have roaring fires to dry the paint and use drying processes, for it will not do to dance

in a room full of steam from the damp plaster. The surface shall be varnished, so that there shall be no smell."

Three days later, the announcement of Birotteau's forthcoming ball created a flutter in the commercial world of that quarter. And not only so, every one could see for himself the timber props, necessitated by the hurried alteration of the staircase, and the square wooden shaft-holes, through which the rubbish was shot into the carts beneath. The men in their haste worked by torchlight, for they had a night-and-day shift, and this collected idlers and inquisitive gazers in the street. On such preparations as these, the gossip of the neighborhood reared sumptuous fabrics of conjecture.

On the Sunday, when the documents relative to the building land were to be signed, M. and Mme. Ragon and Uncle Pillerault came at four o'clock, after vespers. César said that, as the house was so much pulled to pieces, he could only ask Charles Claparon, Roguin, and Crottat for that day. The notary brought a copy of the "Journal des Débats," in which M. de la Billardière had inserted the following paragraph:

"We hear that the liberation of the soil will be celebrated with enthusiasm throughout France; but, in Paris, the members of the municipal administration have felt that the time had come for reviving the splendor of the capital, which has been eclipsed during the foreign occupation from a feeling of patriotism. Each of the mayors and deputy-mayors proposes to give a ball, so that the winter season promises to be a very brilliant one, and the National movement will be followed up. Among the many fêtes about to take place is the much-talked-of ball to be given by M. Birotteau, recently nominated for the Legion of Honor, and so widely known for his devotion to the Royalist cause. M. Birotteau, wounded in the affair of Saint-Roch on the 13th of Vendémiaire, and one of the

most highly respected judges of the Consular Tribunal, has doubly deserved this distinction."

"How well they write nowadays!" exclaimed César. "They are talking about us in the paper," he added, turning to Pillerault.

"Well, and what of that?" returned the uncle, who particularly detested the "Journal des Débats."

"Perhaps the paragraph may sell some of the Pâte des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion," said Mme. César in a low voice to Mme. Ragon. Mme. Birotteau did not share her husband's exhilaration.

Mme. Ragon, a tall, thin woman, with a sharp nose and thin lips, looked a very fair imitation of a marquise of the *ancien régime*. A somewhat wide margin of red encircled her eyes, as sometimes happens with aged women who have known many troubles. Her fine austere face, in spite of its kindliness, was dignified, and there was, moreover, a quaint something about her which struck beholders, yet did not excite a smile, a something interpreted by her manner and her dress. She wore mittens; she carried in all weathers a cane umbrella, such as Marie Antoinette used at the Trianon; her favorite color was that particular pale shade of brown known as *feuille-morte* (dead leaves); her skirts hung from her waist in folds, which will never be seen again, for the dowager ladies of a bygone day have taken their secret with them. Mme. Ragon had not given up the black mantilla bordered with square-meshed black lace; the ornaments in her old-fashioned caps reminded you of the filigree work on old picture-frames. She took snuff with the dainty neatness and the little gestures which a younger generation may recall, if they have been so fortunate as to see their great-aunt or grandmother solemnly set her gold snuff-box on the table beside her, and shake the stray grains from her fichu.

The Sieur Ragon was a little man, five feet high at the

most, with a countenance of the nutcracker type. Two eyes were visible, two prominent cheek-bones, a nose, and a chin. As he had lost his teeth, he mumbled half his words, but he talked like a brook, politely, somewhat pompously, and always with a smile—the same smile with which he had greeted the fair ladies of quality whom one chance or another brought to his store. His hair, tightly scraped back from his forehead and powdered, described a snowy half-moon on his head, with a pair of "pigeon's wings" on either side of a neat queue tied with ribbon. He wore a cornflower-blue coat, a white vest, silk breeches and stockings, black silk gloves, and shoes with gold buckles to them. The most peculiar thing about him was his habit of walking out in the street hat in hand. He looked rather like a messenger of the Chamber of Peers or some usher-in-waiting at the palace—one of those attendant satellites of some great power, which shine with a reflected glory and remain intrinsically insignificant.

"Well, Birotteau," he remarked, and from his tone he might have been addressing an assistant, "are you sorry now, my boy, that you took our advice in those days? Did we ever doubt the gratitude of our beloved royal family?"

"You must be very happy, my dear," said Mme. Ragon, addressing Mme. Birotteau.

"Yes, indeed," returned the fair Constance, who always fell under the charm of that cane umbrella, those butterfly caps, those tight-fitting sleeves, and the ample fichu *à la Julie* that Mme. Ragon wore.

"Césarine looks charming. Come here, pretty child," said Mme. Ragon. She spoke in a patronizing manner and with a high head-voice.

"Shall we settle the business before dinner?" asked Uncle Pillerault.

"We are waiting for Monsieur Claparon," said Roguin; "he was dressing when I left him."

"Monsieur Roguin," César began, "does he quite un-

derstand that we are to dine to-day in a wretched little *entresol*——"

("Sixteen years ago he thought it magnificent," murmured Constance.)

"Among the rubbish, and with all the workmen about?"

"Pooh! you will find him a good fellow, and not hard to please," said Roguin.

"I have left Raguet to look after the store; we cannot come in and out of our own door now; as you have seen, it has all been pulled down," César returned.

"Why did you not bring your nephew?" asked Pillerault of Mme. Ragon.

"Shall we see him later?" suggested Césarine.

"No, darling," said Mme. Ragon. "Anselme, dear boy, is working himself to death. I am afraid of that close street where the sun never shines, that vile-smelling Rue des Cinq-Diamants; the gutter is always black or blue or green. I am afraid he may die there. But when young people set their minds upon anything——!" she said, turning to Césarine with a gesture that interpreted "mind" as "heart."

"Then, has the lease been signed?" asked César.

"Yesterday, before a notary," Ragon replied. "He has taken the place for eighteen years, but he pays the rent six months in advance."

"Well, Monsieur Ragon, are you satisfied with me?" Birotteau asked. "I have given him the secret of a new discovery—in fact!"

"We know you by heart, César," said little Ragon, taking César's hands and pressing them with devout friendliness.

Roguin meanwhile was not without inward qualms. Claparon was about to appear on the scene, and his habits and manner of talking might be something of a shock to these respectable citizens. He thought it necessary to prepare their minds, and spoke, addressing Ragon, Pillerault, and the women.

"You will see an eccentric character," he said; "he hides his talents beneath shocking bad manners; his ideas have raised him from a very low position. No doubt he will acquire better tastes in the society of bankers. You might come across him slouching half-fuddled along the boulevard or in a café playing at billiards; he looks like a great hulking idiot. But nothing of the kind; he is thinking all the time, pondering how to put life into trade by new ideas."

"I can understand that," said Birotteau; "my best ideas came to me while I was sauntering about, didn't they, dear?"

"Claparon makes up for lost time at night, after spending the daytime in meditating over business combinations. All these very clever people lead queer inexplicable lives," Roguin continued. "Well, with all his desultory ways, he gains his end, as I can testify. He made all the owners of our building land give way at last; they were not willing, they demurred at this and that; he mystified them—tired them out; day after day he went to see them, and this time the lots are ours."

A peculiar sounding *broum! broum!* characteristic of drinkers of strong waters and spirits, announced the arrival of the most grotesque personage in this story—who was in the future to enact the part of the arbiter of César's destinies. The perfumer hurried down the narrow, dark staircase, partly to tell Raguet to close the store, partly to make his excuses for receiving Claparon in the dining-room.

"Eh, what? Oh, it will do very well for stowing the vict——, I mean for doing business in."

In spite of Roguin's skillful opening, the entrance of the sham great banker at once produced an unpleasant impression upon those well-bred citizens, M. and Mme. Ragon, upon the observant Pillerault, and upon Césarine and her mother.

At the age of twenty-eight, or thereabouts, the former commercial traveler had not a hair on his head, and wore a wig of corkscrew curls. Such a manner of dressing the hair de-

mands a girlish freshness, a milk-white skin, and the daintiest feminine charm; so it brought out all the vulgarity of a pimpled countenance, a dark-red complexion, flushed like that of a stage coachman, and covered with premature wrinkles and deeply-cut grotesque lines which told of a dissolute life; its ill effects could be read only too plainly in the bad state of his teeth and the black specks dotted over the shriveled skin.

There was something about Claparon that suggested the provincial actor who frequents fairs, and is prepared to play any and every part, to whose worn, shrunken cheeks and flabby lips the paint refuses to adhere; the tongue always wagging even when the man is drunk; the shameless eyes, the compromising gestures. Such a face as this, lighted up by the hilarious flames of punch, little befitted a man accustomed to important business. Indeed, only after prolonged and necessary studies in mimicry had Claparon succeeded in adopting a manner not wholly out of keeping with his supposed importance. Du Tillet had assisted personally at Claparon's toilet, anxious as a nervous manager over the first appearance of his principal actor, for he trembled lest the vicious habits of a reckless life should appear through the veneer of the banker.

"Say as little as you can," said his mentor; "a banker never babbles; he acts, thinks, meditates, listens, and ponders. So, to look like a real banker, you must either not speak at all or say insignificant things. Keep those ribald eyes of yours quiet; look solemn at the risk of looking stupid. In politics, be for the Government, but keep to generalities, such as—'There is a heavy budget; compromise as parties stand is out of the question; Liberalism is dangerous; the Bourbons ought to avoid all collisions; Liberalism is a cloak to hide the schemes of the coalition; the Bourbons are inaugurating an epoch of prosperity, so let us give them our support, whether we are well affected to them or not; France

has had enough of political experiments,' and the like. And don't sprawl over all the tables; remember that you have to sustain the dignity of a millionaire. Don't snort like a pensioner when you take snuff; play with your snuff-box and look at your boots or at the ceiling before you give an answer; look as wise as you can, in fact. Above all things, rid yourself of your unlucky habit of fingering everything. In society a banker ought to look as if he were glad to let his fingers rest. And look here! you work at night, you are stupid with making calculations, there are so many things to consider in the starting of an enterprise! so much thinking is involved! Grumble, above all things, and say that trade is very bad. Trade is dull, slow, hard to move, perplexing. Keep to that, and let particulars alone. Don't begin to sing drolleries of Béranger's at table, and don't drink too much; you will ruin your prospects if you get tipsy. Roguin will keep an eye on you; you are going among moral people, respectable, steady-going folk, don't frighten them by letting out some of your pot-house principles."

This homily produced on Charles Claparon's mind an effect very similar to the strange sensation of his new suit of clothes. The rollicking prodigal, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, accustomed to the comfortable, disreputable garments in which his outer man was as much at home as his thoughts in the language that clothed them, held himself upright, stiff as a poker in the new clothes for which the tailor had kept him waiting to the last minute, and was as ill at ease in his movements as in this new phraseology. He put out a hand unthinkingly toward a flask or a box, then, hurriedly recollecting himself, drew it in again, and in the same way he began a sentence and stopped short in the middle, distinguishing himself by a ludicrous incoherence, which did not escape the observant Pillerault. His round face, like the rakish-looking corkscrew ringlets of his wig, were totally out of keeping with his manner, and he seemed to think one thing and say

another. But the good folk concluded that his inconsequence was the result of preoccupation.

"He does so much business," said Roguin.

"Business has given him very little breeding," Mme. Ragon said to Césarine.

M. Roguin overheard her, and laid a finger on his lips. "He is rich, clever, and honorable to a fault," he said, bending to Mme. Ragon.

"He may be excused something for such qualities as those," said Pillerault to Ragon.

"Let us read over the papers before dinner," said Roguin. "We are alone."

Mme. Ragon, Césarine, and Constance left the contracting parties, Pillerault, Ragon, César, Roguin, and Claparon, to listen to the reading of the documents by Alexandre Crottat. César signed a mortgage bond for forty thousand francs secured on the land and the factory in the Faubourg du Temple (the money had been lent by one of Roguin's clients); he paid over to Roguin Pillerault's order on the bank, gave (without taking a receipt) twenty thousand francs worth of bills from his portfolio, and drew another bill for the remaining hundred and forty thousand francs on Charles Claparon.

"I have no receipt to give you," said that gentleman. "You are acting for your own side with Monsieur Roguin, as we are doing for our share. Our vendors will receive their money from him in coin; I only undertake to complete your payment by paying a hundred and forty thousand francs for your bills——"

"That is right," said Pillerault.

"Well, then, gentlemen, let us call in the ladies again, for it is cold without them," said Claparon, with a look at Roguin to see whether he had gone too far.

"Ladies!—— Ah! mademoiselle is your young lady, of course," said Claparon, looking at Birotteau and straightening himself up. "Well, well, you are not a bungler. Not

one of the roses that you have distilled can be compared with her, and, perhaps, it is because you have distilled roses that——"

"Faith!" said Roguin, interrupting him, "I own that I am hungry."

"Very well, let us have dinner," said Birotteau.

"We are to have dinner in the presence of a notary," said Claparon, with an important air.

"You do a great deal of business, do you not?" said Pillerault, purposely seating himself next to the banker.

"A tremendous amount, wholesale," replied Claparon; "but trade is dull, hard to move—there are canals now. Oh, canals! You have no idea how busy we are with canals. That is comprehensible. The Government wants canals. A canal is a want generally felt. All the trade of a department is interested in a canal, you know! A stream, said Pascal, is a moving highway. The next thing is a market, and markets depend on embankments, for there are a frightful lot of embankments, and the embankments interest the poorer classes, and that means a loan, which finally benefits the poor! Voltaire said, '*Canal, canard, canaille!*' But Government depends for information on its own engineers; it is difficult to meddle in the matter—at least, it is difficult to come to an understanding with them; for the Chamber—— Oh! sir, the Chamber gives us trouble! The Chamber does not want to grapple with the political question hidden beneath the financial question. There is bad faith on all sides. Would you believe this? There are the Kellers—well, then, François Keller is a public speaker, he attacks the measures of the Government as to the funds and canals. He comes home, and then my fine gentleman finds us with our propositions; they are favorable, and he has to make it up with the aforesaid Government, which he attacked so insolently an hour ago. The interests of the public speaker clash with the interests of the banker; we are between two fires. Now you

understand how thorny affairs become; you have to satisfy everybody—the clerks, the people in the chambers, and the people in the ante-chambers, and the ministers——"

"The ministers?" asked Pillerault, who wished to probe this partner's mind thoroughly.

"Yes, sir, the ministers."

"Well, then, the newspapers are right," said Pillerault.

"Here is uncle on politics," said Birotteau; "Monsieur Claparon has set him off."

"Newspapers!" said Claparon, "there are some more confounded humbugs! Newspapers throw us all into confusion; they do us a good turn now and then, but the cruel nights they make me spend! I would as lief be without them; they are the ruin of my eyes, in fact, poring over them and working out calculations."

"But to return to the ministers," said Pillerault, hoping for revelations.

"Ministers have exigencies which are purely governmental. But what am I eating; is it ambrosia?" asked Claparon, interrupting himself. "Here is a sort of sauce that you only have in citizens' houses; you never get it at grub-shops——"

At that word, the ornaments on Mme. Ragon's cap skipped like rams. Claparon gathered that the expression was low, and tried to retrieve his error.

"That is what the heads of large banking firms call the high-class taverns—Véry and the Frères Provençaux. Well, neither those vile grub-shops nor our most accomplished cooks make you a soft, mellow sauce; some give you water with lemon-juice in it, and others give you chemical concoctions."

The conversation at dinner chiefly consisted in attacks from Pillerault, who tried to plumb his man, and only found emptiness; he looked upon him as a dangerous person.

"It is going on all right," said Roguin in Charles Claparon's ear.

"Oh! I shall get out of my clothes to-night, I suppose," answered Claparon, who was gasping for breath.

"We are obliged to use our dining-room as a sitting-room, sir," said Birotteau, "because we are looking forward to a little gathering of our friends in eighteen days' time, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil——"

"Right, sir; I myself am also for the Government. My political convictions incline me to the *statu quo* of the great man who guides the destinies of the house of Austria, a fine fellow! Keep what you have, to get more; and, in the first place, get more, to keep what you have. So now you know the bottom of my opinions, which have the honor to be those of Prince Metternich!"

"Partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor," César went on.

"Why, yes, I know. Now who was telling me about that? Was it the Kellers or Nucingen?"

Roguin, amazed at so much presence of mind, signified his admiration.

"Oh, no; it was at the Chamber."

"At the Chamber. Was it Monsieur de la Billardière?" asked César.

"The very man."

"He is charming," said César, addressing his uncle.

"He pours out talk, talk, talk, till you are drowned in talk," said Pillerault.

"It may be," resumed Birotteau, "that I have shown myself worthy of this favor——"

"By your achievements in perfumery; the Bourbons know how to reward merit of every kind. Ah! let us stand by our generous legitimate Princes, to whom we shall owe unheard-of prosperity about to be. For, you may be sure of it, the Restoration feels that she must enter the lists with the Empire, and the Restoration will make peaceful conquests; you will see conquests!——"

"You will no doubt honor us by coming to our ball, sir," said Mme. César.

"To spend an evening with you, madame, I would miss a chance of making millions."

"He certainly is a babbler," said César in his uncle's ear.

While the waning glory of the Queen of Roses was about to shed abroad its parting rays, a faint star was rising above the commercial horizon; at that very hour, little Popinot was laying the foundations of his fortune in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants. The Rue des Cinq-Diamants, a short, narrow thoroughfare, where loaded wagons can scarcely pass each other, runs between the Rue des Lombards and the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, into which it opens just opposite the end of the Rue Quincampoix, that street so famous in the history of France and of old Paris.

In spite of this narrowness, the near neighborhood of the druggists' quarter made the place convenient; and from that point of view Popinot had not made a bad choice. The house (the second from the end nearest the Rue des Lombards) was so dark that at times it was necessary to work by artificial light in the daytime. Popinot had taken possession the evening before of all its darkest and most unsavory recesses. His predecessor, a dealer in molasses and raw sugars, had left his mark on the place; the walls, the yard, and the warehouse bore unmistakable traces of his occupation.

Imagine a large and roomy store, the huge doors barred with iron and painted dragon-green, the solid iron scroll-work, with bolt-heads as large as mushrooms by way of ornament. The store was adorned and protected, as bakers' stores used to be, by wire-work lattices, which bulged at the bottom, and was paved with great slabs of white stone, cracked for the most part. The walls of a guard-house are not yellower nor barer. Further on came the back-shop and kitchen, which looked out into the yard; and behind these again a second

wareroom, which must at one time have been a stable. An inside staircase had been contrived in the back-shop, by which you gained two rooms that looked out upon the street; here Popinot meant to have his counting-house and his ledgers. Above the warehouse there were three small rooms, all backed against the party-wall, and lighted by windows on the side of the yard. It was in these dilapidated rooms that Popinot proposed to live.

The view from the windows was shut in by the high walls that rose about the dingy, crooked yard, walls so damp that even in the driest weather they looked as if they had been newly distempered. The cracks in the paving-stones were choked with black, malodorous filth, deposited there during the tenancy of the dealer in molasses and raw sugars. So much for the outlook. As to the rooms themselves, only one of them boasted a fireplace; the floors were of brick, the walls were unpapered.

Gaudissart and Popinot had been busy there ever since the morning, putting up a cheap wall-paper with their own hands in the ugly room; a journeyman paperhanger whom Gaudissart ferreted out had varnished it for them. The furniture consisted of a student's mattress, a wooden bedstead painted red, a rickety nightstand, a venerable chest of drawers, a table, a couple of armchairs, and half-a-dozen ordinary chairs, a present from Popinet the judge to his nephew. Gaudissart had put a cheap pier-glass over the mantel. It was almost eight o'clock in the evening, and the two friends, sitting before a blazing fire, were about to discuss the remains of their breakfast.

"Away with the cold mutton! It is out of character in a house-warming," cried Gaudissart.

Popinot held up his last twenty-franc piece, which was to pay for the prospectus. "But I——" he began.

"I?" retorted Gaudissart, sticking a forty-franc piece into his eye.

A knock at the street-door reverberated through the yard. It was Sunday. The workpeople were taking their holiday away from their workshops, and the idle echoes greeted every sound.

"There is my trusty man from the Rue de la Poterie," Gaudissart went on. "For my own part, it is not simply 'I,' but 'I have.'"

And, in fact, a waiter appeared, followed by two kitchen-boys, carrying between them three wicker baskets, containing a dinner, and crowned by six bottles of wine selected with discrimination.

"But how are we to eat such a lot of things?" asked Popinot.

"There is the man of letters," cried Gaudissart. "Finot understands the pomps and vanities. The artless youth will be here directly with a prospectus fit to make your hair stand on end (neat that, eh?), and prospectuses are always dry work. You must water the seeds if you mean to have flowers. Here, minions," he added, striking an attitude for the benefit of the kitchen-boys, "here's gold for you."

He held out six sous with a gesture worthy of his idol, Napoleon.

"Thank you, Monsieur Gaudissart," said the scullions, more pleased with the joke than with the few centimes of money.

"As for thee, my son," he continued, turning to the waiter who remained, "there is a portress here. She crouches in the depths of a cave, where at times she does some cooking, as erewhile Nausicaa did the washing, simply by way of relaxation. Hie thee to her, work on her trustful nature; interest her, young man, in the temperature of thy hot dishes. Say to her that she shall be blessed, and above all things respected, highly respected, by Felix Gaudissart, son of Jean-François Gaudissart, and grandson of Gaudissart, vile proletaries of remote lineage, his ancestors. Off with you, and act

in such a sort that everything shall be good; for if it isn't I will make you laugh on the wrong side of your face."

There was another knock at the door.

"That is the ingenious Andoche," said Gaudissart.

A stout young fellow suddenly entered. He had somewhat chubby cheeks, was of middle height, and from head to foot looked like the hatter's son. A certain shrewdness lurked beneath the air of constraint that sat on his rounded features. The habitual dejection of a man who is tired of poverty left him, and a hilarious expression crossed his countenance at the sight of the preparations on the table and the significant seals on the bottle-corks. At Gaudissart's shout, a twinkle came into the pale-blue eyes, the big head, on which a Kalmuck physiognomy had been carved, rolled from side to side, and he gave Popinot a distant greeting, in which there was neither servility nor respect, like a man who feels out of his element and stands on his dignity.

Finot was just beginning to discover that he had no sort of talent for literature; he did not think of quitting his calling: he meant to exploit literature by raising himself on the shoulders of men who possessed the talent which he lacked. Instead of doing ill-paid work himself he would turn his business capacities to account. He was just at the turning-point; he had exhausted the expedients of humility; he had experienced to the full the humiliations of failure; and, like those who take a wide outlook over the financial world, he resolved to change his tactics and to be insolent in future. He needed capital in the first instance, and Gaudissart had opened out a prospect of making the money by putting Popinot's oil before the public.

"You will make his arrangements with the newspapers," Gaudissart had said, "but don't swindle him; if you do there will be a duel to the death between us; give him value for his money!"

Popinot looked uneasily at the "author." Your true man

of business regards an author with mixed feelings, in which alarm and curiosity are blended with compassion; and though Popinot had been well educated, his relations' attitude of mind and ways of thinking, together with a course of drudgery in a store, had produced their effect on his intelligence, and he bent beneath the yoke of use and wont. You can see this by noticing the metamorphoses which ten years will effect among a hundred boys, who when they left school or college were almost exactly alike.

Andoche mistook the impression which he had made for admiration.

"Very well. Let us run through the prospectus before dinner, then it will be off our minds, and we can drink," said Gaudissart. "It is uncomfortable to read after dinner; the tongue is digesting too."

"Sir," said Popinot, "a prospectus often means a whole fortune."

"And for nobodies like me," said Andoche, "fortune is nothing but a prospectus."

"Ah! very good," said Gaudissart. "That droll fellow of an Andoche has wit enough for the Forty."

"For a hundred," said Popinot, awestruck with the idea.

Gaudissart snatched up the manuscript, and read aloud, and with emphasis, the first two words—"Cephalic Oil!"

"I like Cesarian Oil better," said Popinot.

"You don't know them in the provinces, my friend," said Gaudissart. "There is a surgical operation known by that name, and they are so stupid that they will think your oil is meant to facilitate childbirth; and if they start off with the notion, it would be too hard work to bring them all the way back to hair again."

"Without defending the name," observed the author, "I would call your attention to the fact that Cephalic Oil means oil for the head, and resumes your ideas."

"Go on!" said Popinot impatiently.

And here follows a second historical document, a prospectus, which even at this day is circulating by thousands among retail perfumers:

GOLD MEDAL, PARIS, 1824.*

CEPHALIC OIL

(Improved Patent).

No cosmetic can make the hair grow; and in the same way, it cannot be dyed by chemical preparations without danger to the seat of the intelligence. Science has recently proclaimed that the hair is not a living substance, and that there is no means of preventing it from blanching or falling out. To prevent xerasia and baldness, the bulb at the roots should be preserved from all atmospheric influences and the natural temperature of the head evenly maintained. The *Cephalic Oil*, based on these principles established by the Royal Academy of Sciences, induces the important result so highly prized by the ancients, the Romans and Greeks, and the nations of the North—a fine head of hair. Learned research has brought to light the fact that the nobles of olden times, who were distinguished by their long, flowing locks, used no other means than these; their recipe, long lost, has been ingeniously rediscovered by A. POPINOT, inventor of *Cephalic Oil.*

To preserve the glands, and not to provoke an impossible or hurtful stimulation of the dermis which contains them, is, therefore, the function of *Cephalic Oil.* This oil, which exhales a delicious fragrance, prevents the exfoliation of the pellicle; while the substances of which it is composed (the essential oil of the hazelnut being the principal element) counteract the effects of atmospheric air upon the head, thus preventing chills, catarrh, and all unpleasant encephalic affections by maintaining the natural temperature. In this manner the glands, which contain the hair-producing secretions, are never attacked by heat or cold. A fine head of hair—that glorious product so highly valued by either sex—may be retained to extreme old age by the use of *Cephalic Oil*, which imparts to the hair the

* The next "Quinquennial Exhibition."

brilliancy, silkiness, and gloss which constitutes the charm of children's heads.

Directions for use are issued on the wrapper of every bottle.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE.

It is perfectly useless to apply oil to the hair itself; beside being an absurd superstition, it is an obnoxious practice, for the cosmetic leaves its traces everywhere.

It is only necessary to part the hair with a comb, and to apply the oil to the roots every morning with a small, fine sponge, proceeding thus until the whole surface of the skin has received a slight application, the hair having been previously combed and brushed.

To prevent spurious imitations, each bottle bears the signature of the inventor. Sold at the price of THREE FRANCS by A. POPINOT, Rue des Cinq-Diamants, Quartier des Lombards, Paris.

It is particularly requested that all communications by post should be prepaid.

Note.—A. POPINOT also supplies essences and pharmaceutical preparations, such as neroli, oil of spike-lavender, oil of sweet-almonds, cacao-butter, caffein, castor oil, *et cætera.*

"My dear fellow," said the illustrious Gaudissart, addressing Finot, "it is perfectly written! Ye gods, how we plunge into deep science! No shuffling; we go straight to the point! Ah! I congratulate you heartily; there is literature of some practical use!"

"A fine prospectus!" cried Popinot enthusiastically.

"The very first sentence is a death-blow to Macassar," said Gaudissart, rising to his feet with a magisterial air, to proclaim with an oratorical gesture between each word, "'You—cannot—make—hair—grow. It—cannot—be—dyed—without—danger!' Aha! success lies in that. Modern science corroborates the custom of the ancients. You can suit yourself to old and young. You have to do with an old man. 'Aha, sir! the Greeks and Romans, the ancients, were in the right; they were not such fools as some would make them out

to be!' Or if it is a young man. 'My dear fellow, another discovery due to the progress of enlightenment; we are progressing. What must we not expect from steam, and the telegraph, and such like inventions? This oil is the outcome of Monsieur Vauquelin's investigations!' How if we were to print an extract from M. Vauquelin's paper, eh? Capital! Come, Finot, draw up your chair! Let us stow the victuals, and tipple down the champagne to our young friend's success!"

"It seemed to me," said the author modestly, "that the time for the light and playful prospectus has gone by; we are entering on an epoch of science, and must talk learnedly and authoritatively to make an impression on the public."

"We will push the oil. My feet, and my tongue, too, are hankering to go. I have agencies for all the houses that deal in hairdressers' goods, not one of them gives more than thirty per cent. of discount; make up your mind to give forty, and I will engage to sell a hundred thousand bottles in six months. I will make a set on all the druggists, grocers, and hairdressers! And if you will allow them forty per cent. on your oil, they will all send their customers wild for it."

The three young men ate like lions, drank like Swiss, and waxed merry over the future success of the Cephalic Oil.

"This oil goes to your head," said Finot, smiling, and Gaudissart exhausted whole series of puns on the words oil, head, and hair.

In the midst of their Homeric laughter over the dessert, the knocker sounded, and, in spite of the toasts and the wishes for luck exchanged among the three friends, they heard it.

"It is my uncle! He is capable of coming to see me," cried Popinot.

"An uncle?" asked Finot, "and we have not a glass!"

"My friend Popinot's uncle is an examining magistrate," said Gaudissart, by way of reply to Finot; "there is no occa-

sion to hoax him, he saved my life. Ah! if you had found yourself in the fix I was in, with the scaffold staring you in the face, where, *kouik*, off goes your hair for good!" (and he imitated the fatal knife by a gesture), "you would be apt to remember the righteous judge to whom you owe the preservation of the channel that the champagne goes down! You would remember him if you were dead drunk. You don't know, Finot, but what you may want M. Popinot one day. *Saquerlotte!* You must make your bow to him, and thirteen to the dozen!"

It was, as a matter of fact, the "righteous judge," who was asking for his nephew of the woman who opened the door. Anselme recognized the voice, and went down, candle in hand, to light his way.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said the magistrate.

The illustrious Gaudissart made a profound bow. Finot looked the new-comer over with drunken eyes, and decided that Popinot's uncle was tolerably wooden-headed.

"There is no luxury here," said the judge, gravely looking round the room; "but, my boy, you must begin by being nothing if you are to be something great."

"How profound he is!" exclaimed Gaudissart, turning to Finot.

"An idea for an article," said the journalist.

"Oh! is that you, sir?" asked the judge, recognizing the commercial traveler. "Eh! what are you doing here?"

"I want to do all my little part, sir, toward making your dear nephew's fortune. We have just been pondering over the prospectus for this oil of his, and this gentleman here is the author of the prospectus, which seems to us to be one of the finest things in the literature of periwigs."

The judge looked at Finot.

"This gentleman is Monsieur Andoche Finot," Gaudissart said, "one of the most distinguished young men in literature; he does political leaders and the minor theatres for the Gov-

ernment newspapers; he is a minister who is by way of being an author."

Here Finot tugged at Gaudissart's coat-tails.

"Very well, boys," said the judge, to whom these words explained the appearance of the table covered with the remnants of a feast very excusable under the circumstances.

"As for you, Anselme," he continued, turning to Popinot, "get ready to pay a visit to Monsieur Birotteau; I must go to see him this evening. You will sign your deed of partnership; I have gone through it very carefully. As you are going to manufacture your oil in the Faubourg du Temple, I think that he ought to make over the lease of the workshop to you, and that he has power to sublet; if things are all in order, it will save disputes afterward. These walls look to me to be very damp, Anselme; bring up trusses of straw and put them round about where your bed stands."

"Excuse me, sir," said Gaudissart with a courtier's suppleness, "we have just put up the wall-paper ourselves to-day, and—it—is—not quite dry."

"Economy! good!" said the judge.

"Listen," said Gaudissart in Finot's ear; "my friend Popinot is a good young man; he is going off with his uncle, so come along and let us finish the evening with our fair cousins."

The journalist turned out the lining of his vest pocket. Popinot saw the manœuvre, and slipped a twenty-franc piece into the hand of the author of his prospectus. The judge had a cab waiting at the corner of the street, and carried off his nephew to call on Birotteau.

Pillerault, M. and Mme. Ragon, and Roguin were playing at boston, and Césarine was embroidering a fichu, when the elder Popinot and Anselme appeared. Roguin, sitting opposite Mme. Ragon, could watch Césarine, who sat by her side, and saw the happy look on the girl's face when Anselme came in, saw her flush up red as a pomegranate flower, and

called his head clerk's attention to her by a significant gesture.

"So this is to be a day of deeds, is it?" said the perfumer, when greetings had been exchanged, and the judge explained the reason of the visit.

César, Anselme, and the judge went up to the perfumer's temporary quarters on the second floor to debate the matter of the lease and the deed of partnership drawn up by the elder Popinot. It was arranged that the lease should run for eighteen years, so as to be conterminous with the lease of the house in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants; trifling matter as it appeared at the time, it was destined later to serve Birotteau's interests.

When they returned to the sitting-room, the elder Popinot, surprised by the confusion and the men at work on a Sunday in the house of so devout a man, asked the reason of it all. This was the question for which César was waiting.

"Although you are not worldly, sir, you will not object to our celebrating our deliverance; and that is not all—if we are arranging for a little gathering of our friends, it is partly also to celebrate my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said the examining magistrate (who had not been decorated).

"It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of royal favor by discharging my functions at the Tribunal—— oh! I mean to say Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the steps——"

"Yes," said the magistrate.

"Steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon."

"I shall be glad to come," said M. Popinet; "and if my wife is well enough, I will bring her."

"Xandrot," said Roguin, on the doorstep, "give up all

thoughts of marrying Césarine; in six weeks' time you will see that I have given you sound counsel."

"Why?" asked Crottat.

"My dear fellow, Birotteau is about to spend a hundred thousand francs over this ball of his, and he is embarking his whole fortune, against my advice, in this building-land scheme. In six weeks' time these people will not have bread to eat. Marry Mademoiselle Lourdois, the house-painter's daughter; she has three hundred thousand francs to her fortune. I have planned this shift for you. If you will pay me down the money, you can have my practice to-morrow for a hundred thousand francs."

The splendors of the perfumer's forthcoming ball, announced to Europe by the newspapers, were very differently announced in commercial circles by flying rumors of workpeople employed night and day on the perfumer's house. The rumors took various forms; here it was said that César had taken the house on either side; there, that his drawing-rooms were to be gilded; some said that no tradespeople would be invited, and that the ball was given to Government officials only; and the perfumer was severely blamed for his ambition, they scoffed at his political aspirations, they denied that he had been wounded! More than one scheme was set on foot, in the second arrondissement, in consequence of the ball; the friends of the family took things quietly, but the claims of distant acquaintances were vast.

Those who have favor to bestow never lack courtiers; and a goodly number of the guests were at no little pains to procure their cards of invitation. The Birotteaus were amazed to find so many friends whose existence they had not suspected. This eagerness on their part alarmed Mme. Birotteau; she looked more and more gloomy as the days went by and the solemn festival came nearer. She had confessed to César from the very first that she should not know how to

act her part as hostess, and the innumerable small details frightened her. Where was the plate to come from? How about the glass, the refreshments, the forks and spoons? And who would look after it all? She begged Birotteau to stand near the door and see that no one came who had not been asked to the ball; she had heard strange things about people who came to dances claiming acquaintance with people whom they did not know by name.

One evening, ten days before the famous Sunday, Messieurs Braschon, Grindot, Lourdois, and Chaffaroux the contractor having given their word that the rooms should be ready for the 17th of December, there had been a laughable conference after dinner in the humble little sitting-room on the mezzanine floor—César and his wife and daughter were making a list of guests and writing the cards of invitation, which had been sent in only that morning, nicely printed in the English fashion on rose-colored paper, in accordance with the precepts laid down in the "Complete Guide to Etiquette."

"Look here!" said César; "we must not leave anybody out."

"If we forget any one," remarked Constance, "we shall be reminded of it. Madame Derville, who never called upon us before, sailed in yesterday evening in great state."

"She was very pretty; I liked her," said Césarine.

"Yet before she was married she was even worse off than was I," said Constance; "she used to do plain needlework in the Rue Montmartre; she has made shirts for your father."

"Well, let us put the great people down at the top of the list," said César. "Write 'M. le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Lenoncourt,' Césarine."

"Goodness! César," cried Constance, "pray don't begin to send invitations to people whom you only know through the business. Are you going to ask the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry? She is more nearly related to your late godmother, the Marquise d'Uxelles, than even the Duc de Lenoncourt.

And shall you ask the two Messieurs Vandenesse, de Marsay, de Ronquerolles, de l'Aiglemont; in short, all your customers? You are mad; honors are turning your head——"

"Yes! but Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine and his family. Eh? He used to come to the Queen of Roses under the name of Grand-Jacques with the Gars (M. le Marquis de Montauran that was) and Monsieur de la Billardière, whom they called the Nantais in the days before the great affair of the 13th of Vendémiaire. And they would shake hands with you then, and it was, 'My dear Birotteau, keep your heart up, and give your life, like the rest of us, for the good cause!' We are old fellow-conspirators."

"Put him down," said Constance; "if Monsieur de la Billardière and his son are coming they must have somebody to speak to."

"Set down his name, Césarine," said Birotteau. "*Imprimis*, his worship the prefect of the Seine; he may or may not come, but he is the head of the municipal corporation, and 'honor to whom honor is due.' Monsieur de la Billardière, the mayor, and his son. (Write down the number of the people after every name.) My colleague, Monsieur Granet, and his wife. She is very ugly, but, all the same, we cannot leave her out. Monsieur Curel, the goldsmith, colonel of the National Guard, and his wife and two daughters. Those are what I call the authorities. Now for the big-wigs! Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Fontaine and their daughter, Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine."

"An insolent girl, who makes me come out of the store to speak to her at her carriage-door in all weathers," said Mme. César. "If she comes at all, it will be to make fun of us."

"In that case, perhaps, she will come," said César, who meant to fill his rooms at all costs. "Go on, Césarine—Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Granville, my landlord, the hardest head in the Court of Appeal, Derville says. Oh! by-the-by, Monsieur de la Billardière has arranged

for me to be presented to-morrow by Monsieur le Comte de Lacépède himself; it is only polite to ask the grand chancellor to dinner and to the ball. Monsieur Vauquelin. Put him down for the dinner and for the ball too, Césarine. And, while we remember it, all the Chiffrevilles and the Protez family. Monsieur Popinot, judge of the Tribunal of the Seine, and Madame Popinot. Monsieur and Madame Thirion, he is an usher of the Privy Chamber and a friend of the Ragons; it is said that their daughter is to be married to one of Monsieur Camusot's sons by his first marriage."

"César, do not forget young Horace Bianchon; he is Popinot's nephew and Anselme's cousin," put in Constance.

"Ah, to be sure? Césarine has put a figure four very plainly after the Popinots. Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin; Rabourdin is at the head of one of the departments in de la Billardière's division. Monsieur Cochin of the same department, and his wife and son; they are sleeping-partners in Matifat's concern; and, while we are about it, put down Monsieur and Madame and Mademoiselle Matifat."

"The Matifats have been making overtures for their friends, Monsieur and Madame Colleville, Monsieur and Madame Thuillier, and the Saillards."

"We shall see," said César. "Our stockbroker, Jules Desmarets, and his wife."

"She will be the prettiest woman in the room!" cried Césarine. "I like her, oh! more than any one!"

"Derville and his wife."

"Just put down Monsieur and Madame Coquelin, who took over Uncle Pillerault's business," said Constance. "They made so sure of being asked that the poor little thing is having a grand ball-dress made by my dressmaker—a white satin overskirt covered with tulle, embroidered with blue chicory flowers. It would not have taken much to persuade her to have a gold-embroidered court-dress. If we left them out, we should make two bitter enemies."

"Put them down, Césarine; we must show our respect for trade, for we are tradespeople ourselves. Monsieur and Madame Roguin."

"Mamma, Madame Roguin will wear her necklace, all her diamonds, and her mechlin-lace gown."

"Monsieur and Madame Lebas," César continued. "And next, the president of the Tribunal of Commerce and his wife and two daughters (I forgot to put them among the authorities). Monsieur and Madame Lourdois and their daughter. Claparon the banker; du Tillet, Grindot, Monsieur Molineux; Pillerault and his landlord; Monsieur and Madame Camusot, the rich silk mercer, and all their family, the one at the École Polytechnique and the advocate; he will receive an appointment as judge—he is the one that is engaged to be married to Mademoiselle Thirion."

"It will only be a provincial appointment," said Mademoiselle Césarine.

"Monsieur Cardot, Camusot's father-in-law, and all the young Cardots. Stay! there are the Guillaumes in the Rue du Colombier, Lebas' wife's people, two old folk who will be wall-flowers. Alexandre Crottat—Célestin——"

"Papa, do not forget Andoche Finot and Gaudissart, two young men who have been so useful to Anselme."

"Gaudissart? He got himself into trouble. But never mind, he is going away in a few days, and will travel for our oil—so put him down! As for Master Andoche Finot, what is he to us?"

"Anselme says that he will be a great man; he is as clever as Voltaire."

"An author is he? They are all of them atheists."

"Put him down, papa; so far there are not so very many men who dance. Beside, your nice prospectus for the oil was his doing."

"He believes in our oil, does he?" said César. "Put him down, dear child."

"So I, too, have my protégés on the list," commented Césarine.

"Put Mitral, my process-server, and our doctor, Monsieur Haudry; it is for form's sake, he will not come."

"He will come for his game of cards," said Césarine.

"Ah! by-the-by, César, I hope that you will ask Monsieur l'Abbé Loraux to dinner!"

"I have written to him already," said César.

"Oh! we must not forget Lebas' sister-in-law, Madame Augustine de Sommervieux," said Césarine. "Poor little thing! she is very unwell; Lebas said that she was dying of grief."

"See what comes of marrying an artist," cried the perfumer. "Just look at your mother; she has fallen asleep," he said, in a low voice, to his daughter. "By-by—sleep softly, Madame César. Well, now," said César, turning to his daughter, "how about your mother's dress?"

"Yes, papa, everything will be ready. Mamma thinks that she is to have a Canton crepe gown like mine, and the dressmaker is sure that there is no need to try it on."

"How many are there altogether?" César went on aloud, as his wife opened her eyes.

"A hundred and nine, with the assistants," said Césarine.

"Where are we going to put all those people?" asked Mme. Birotteau. "And when all is over, after the Sunday comes Monday," she said naïvely.

Nothing can be done simply when people aspire to rise from one social rank to another. Neither Mme. Birotteau, nor César, nor any one else might venture on any pretext whatsoever on to the second floor. César had promised the errand-boy Raguet a new suit of clothes if he kept watch faithfully and carried out his orders properly. Like the Emperor Napoleon at Compiègne, when he had the château restored for his marriage with Marie-Louise of Austria, Birotteau wanted to see nothing until the whole was finished; he

meant to enjoy "the surprise." So all unconsciously the old enemies met, this time not on the field of battle, but on the common ground of bourgeois vanity. M. Grindot was to take César over the new rooms like a cicerone exhibiting a gallery to a tourist.

Every one in the house, moreover, had his or her own "surprise." Césarine, the dear child, had spent a hundred louis, all her little hoard, on books for her father. M. Grindot had confided to her one morning that there were two fitted bookcases in her father's room, which was to be a study; this was the architect's surprise; and Césarine spent all her savings with a bookseller. She had bought the works of Bossuet, Racine, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Molière, Buffon, Fénelon, Delille, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, La Fontaine, Corneille, Pascal, and La Harpe; in short, the ordinary collection of classics to be seen everywhere, books which her father would never read. A terrible bookbinder's bill must of necessity be the result. Thouvenin, that great and unpunctual artist and binder, had undertaken to send the books home on the 18th at midday. Césarine had told her uncle in confidence of her difficulty, and he had undertaken the bill. César's surprise for his wife took the shape of a cherry-colored velvet gown trimmed with lace; it was of this dress that he had just spoken to the daughter, who had been his accomplice. Mme. Birotteau's surprise for the new Chevalier of Honor consisted of a pair of gold buckles and a solitaire-pin. Finally, there was the surprise of the new rooms for the whole family, to be followed in a fortnight by the great surprise of the bills to be paid.

After mature reflection, César decided that some of the invitations must be given in person, and some might be delivered by Raguet in the evening. He took a cab and handed his wife into it (his wife, whose beauty suffered a temporary eclipse from a hat and feathers and the last new shawl, the cashmere shawl for which she had longed for fifteen years),

and away went the perfumers dressed in their best to acquit themselves of twenty-two calls in a morning.

César spared his wife the difficulties attendant on straining the resources of a bourgeois household to prepare the various confections which the splendor of the occasion demanded. A treaty was arranged between Birotteau and the great Chevet. Chevet would furnish the dinner and the wines; he would provide a splendid service of plate (which brings in as much as an estate to its owner), and a retinue of servants under the command of a sufficiently imposing chief steward, all of them responsible for their sayings and doings. Chevet was to take up his quarters in the kitchen and dining-room on the mezzanine floor, and not to quit possession until he had served up a dinner for twenty persons at six o'clock, and a grand collation an hour after midnight. The ices, to be served in pretty cups with silver-gilt spoons on silver trays, would be supplied by Foy's Café, and the refreshments by Tanrade—an added lustre to the feast.

"Be easy," César said to his wife, who looked somewhat over-anxious on the day before the great day, "Chevet, Tanrade, and the people from Foy's Café will occupy the mezzanine floor, Virginie will be on guard above, and the store shall be shut up. There is nothing left for us to do but to strut about on the second floor."

On the 16th, at two o'clock, M. de la Billardière came for César. They were to go together to the Chancellerie de la Légion d'honneur, where Birotteau, with some ten others, was to be received as a Chevalier by M. le Comte de Lacépède. The perfumer had tears in his eyes when the mayor came for him; the surprise which Constance had planned had just taken place, and César had been presented with the gold buckles and solitaire.

"It is very sweet to be so loved," said he, as he stepped into the cab; Constance and Césarine standing on the thresh-

old, and the assistants gathered in a group to see him go. All of them gazed at César in his silk stockings and black-silk breeches, and the new coat of cornflower-blue on which the ribbon was about to blaze—the red ribbon which, according to Molineux, had been steeped in blood.

When César came back at dinner-time, he was pale with joy. He looked at his cross in every looking-glass, for in his first intoxication he could not be content to wear the ribbon only; there was no tinge of false modesty about his elation.

"The grand chancellor is charming, dear," said he; "at a word from Monsieur de la Billardière, he accepted my invitation; he is coming with Monsieur Vauquelin. De Lacépède is a great man, yes, as great as Vauquelin. He has written forty volumes. And then he is a peer of France as well as an author. We must not forget to say 'Your Lordship' or 'Monsieur le Comte' when we address him."

"Do eat your dinner," remarked his wife. "Your father is worse than a child," Constance added, looking at Césarine.

"How nice that looks at your button-hole!" said Césarine. "They will present arms when you pass; we will go out together!"

"All the sentries will present arms to me."

Grindot and Braschon came downstairs as he spoke. "After dinner, sir, you and madame and mademoiselle may like to look over the rooms; Braschon's foreman is just putting up a few curtain brackets, and three men are lighting the candles."

"You will need a hundred and twenty candles," said Braschon.

"A bill for two hundred francs from Trudon," began Mme. César, but a look from the chevalier checked her lamentations.

"Your fête will be magnificent, Monsieur le Chevalier," put in Braschon.

"Flatterers already!" César thought within himself. "The good Abbé Loraux enjoined it upon me not to fall into their

snares and to remain humble; I will always keep my origin in mind."

But César did not understand the drift of the remark let fall by the rich upholsterer of the Rue Saint-Antoine. Braschon had made a dozen futile efforts to secure invitations for himself and his wife, his daughter, aunt, and mother-in-law. And so César made an enemy. On the threshold, Braschon did not call him again "Monsieur le Chevalier."

Then came the private view. César and his wife and Césarine went out through the store and came in from the street. The door had been reconstructed in a grand style, the two leaves were divided up into square panels, and in the centre of each panel was a cast-iron ornament, duly painted. This kind of door, which is now so common in Paris, was at that time the very newest thing. Beneath the double staircase in the vestibule, opposite the door, in the plinth which had so disturbed César's mind, a sort of box had been contrived where an old woman could be ensconced. The vestibule, with its black-and-white marble floor and its walls painted to look like marble, was lighted by a lamp of antique pattern, with four sockets for the wicks. The architect had combined a rich effect with apparent simplicity. A narrow crimson carpet relieved the whiteness of the stone. The first landing gave access to the mezzanine floor. The door on the staircase, which gave access to the second-floor rooms, was in the same style as the street-door, but this was a piece of cabinet-work.

"How charming!" said Césarine. "And yet there is nothing which catches the eye."

"Exactly, mademoiselle, the effect is produced by the exact proportions of the stylobates, the plinths, the cornice, and the ornaments; and then I have not employed gilding anywhere; the colors are subdued, and there are no glaring tones."

"It is a science," said Césarine.

Then they entered the anteroom; it was simple, spacious, and tastefully decorated; a parquet floor had been laid down. The drawing-room was lighted by three windows, which looked upon the street; here the colors were white and red; the outlines of the cornices were delicate, so was the paint. There was nothing to dazzle the eyes. The ornaments on the mantel, of white marble supported on white marble columns, had been carefully chosen; there was nothing tawdry about them, and they were in keeping with the details of the furniture. In fact, throughout the room a subtle harmony prevailed, such as none but an artist can establish, by subordinating everything, down to the least accessories, to the general scheme of decoration; a harmony which strikes the philistine, though he cannot account for it. The light of twenty-four wax-candles in the chandelier displayed the glories of the crimson-silk curtains; the parquet floor tempted Césarine to dance. Through a green-and-white boudoir they reached César's study.

"I have put a bed here," said Grindot, throwing open the doors of an alcove, cleverly concealed between the two bookcases. "Either you or Madame Birotteau may fall ill, and an invalid requires a separate room."

"But the bookcase is full of bound books! Oh! wife, wife!" cried César.

"No, this is Césarine's surprise."

"Pardon a father's emotion," exclaimed Birotteau, embracing his daughter.

"Of course, of course, sir," said Grindot. "You are in your own house."

The prevailing tone of the study was brown, relieved by green; for by skillful modulations all the rooms were brought into harmony with each other. Thus the prevailing color of one room was more sparingly introduced as a subsidiary in another, and *vice versâ*. The print of "Hero and Le-

ander" shone conspicuous from a fine panel in César's new sanctum.

"And *you* are to pay for all this?" César said merrily.

"That beautiful engraving is Monsieur Anselme's gift to you," said Césarine.

(Anselme, like the others, had managed to afford his surprise.)

"Poor boy! he has done as I did for Monsieur Vauquelin."

Mme. Birotteau's room came next in order. Here the architect had lavished splendors to please the good folk whom he wished to use to his own ends. He had promised to make a study of this redecoration, and he had kept his word. The room was hung with blue silk, but the cords and tassels were white; while the furniture, covered with white cashmere, was relieved with blue. The clock on the white marble mantel took the form of a marble slab, on which Venus reclined. The pretty Wilton carpet, of Eastern design, was the keynote of Césarine's apartment, a dainty little bedroom hung with chintz; there stood her piano, a pretty wardrobe with a mirror in it, a small white bed with plain curtains, and all the little possessions that girls love.

The dining-room lay behind César's study and the blue-and-white bedroom, and was entered by a door on the staircase. Here the decorations were in the style known as Louis XIV. The sideboards were inlaid with brass and tortoise-shell; there was a boule clock; and the walls were hung with stuffs and adorned with gilt studs.

No words can describe the joy of these three human beings, which reached its height when Mme. Birotteau, returning to her room, found her new dress lying there on the bed; the cherry-colored velvet gown, trimmed with lace, which her husband had given her. Virginie had stolen in on tiptoe to lay it there.

"The rooms do you great credit, sir," Constance said, ad-

dressing Grindot. "More than a hundred people will be here to-morrow evening, and you will be complimented by everybody."

"I shall recommend you," said César. "You will meet all the first-rate people, and you will be better known in a single evening than if you had built a hundred houses."

Constance, touched by what had happened, no longer thought of the expense or of criticising her husband, and for the following reasons: That morning, when Popinot had brought the "Hero and Leander," he had assured her that the Cephalic Oil would be a success; Constance had always had a high opinion of Popinot's abilities and intelligence, and Popinot was working with unheard-of enthusiasm. The money lavished by Birotteau on these extravagancies might amount to a good round sum; but the young lover had promised that, in six months' time, Birotteau's share of the profits on the sales of the oil would cover them. After nineteen years of apprehension, it was so sweet to put doubts aside for a single day; and Constance promised her daughter that she would not spoil her husband's joy by any after-thought, but would give herself up entirely to gladness. So when M. Grindot left them about eleven o'clock, she flung her arms about her husband's neck and shed a few tears of joy.

"Ah, César," she said, "you make me very silly and very happy."

"If it will only last, you mean, do you not?" César asked, smiling.

"It will last; I have no fear now," said Mme. César.

"That is right; you appreciate me at last."

Those who have sufficient greatness of character to know their weaknesses will confess that a poor orphan girl who, eighteen years ago, had been earning her living behind the counter of the Little Sailor in the Ile Saint-Louis, and a poor peasant-lad who had come on foot from Touraine, stick in hand and with hobnailed shoes on his feet, might well feel gratified

and happy to give such a fête on an occasion so much to their credit.

"My God, I would willingly give a hundred francs for a visitor," cried César.

"Monsieur l'Abbé Loraux," announced Virginie, and the abbé appeared. The priest was at this time curate of Saint-Sulpice. Never has the power of the soul been more plainly revealed than in this reverend ecclesiastic, who left a profound impression on the minds of all those with whom he came in contact. The exercise of Catholic virtues had given sublimity to a harsh face, almost repellent in its ugliness; it was as if something of the light of heaven shone from it before the time. The influences of a simple and sincere life, passing into the blood, had modified those rugged features, the fires of charity had chastened their uncouth outlines. In Claparon's case, the nature of the man had stamped itself on his face and degraded and brutalized it, but here the grace of the three fair human virtues, Hope, Faith, and Charity, hovered about the wrinkled lines. There was a penetrating power in his words, slowly and gently spoken. He dressed like other priests in Paris, and allowed himself a chestnut-brown overcoat. No trace of ambition had sullied the pure heart, which the angels would surely bear to God in its primitive innocence; it had required all the kindly urgency of the daughter of Louis XVI. to induce the Abbé Loraux to accept a benefice in Paris, and then he had taken one of the poorest.

Just now he looked somewhat disquieted as he surveyed all these splendors; he smiled at the three before him and shook his head.

"Children," he said, "it is my part to comfort those that mourn, and not to be present at festivals. I have come to thank Monsieur César and to congratulate you. There is only one festival that will bring me here—the marriage of this pretty maid."

A quarter of an hour later the abbé took his leave, and

neither César nor his wife had dared to show him the new arrangements. The sober apparition threw a few drops of cold water on César's joyous ebullitions.

They slept that night amid the new glories, each taking possession of the little luxuries and pretty furniture for which they had longed. Césarine helped her mother to undress before the mirror of the white marble toilet table; César was fain to use his newly acquired superfluities at once; and the heads of all the three were filled with visions of the joys of the morrow.

The next day, at four o'clock, they had been to mass and had read vespers; the mezzanine floor had been delivered over to the secular arm, in the shape of Chevet's people, and Césarine and her mother betook themselves to their toilets. Never was costume more becoming to Mme. César than the cherry-colored velvet gown with the lace about it, the short sleeves adorned with lappets; the rich stuff and the glowing color set off the youthful freshness of her shapely arms, the dazzling whiteness of her skin, the gracious outlines of her neck and shoulders. The naïve happiness felt by every woman when she is conscious that she looks at her best lent a vague sweetness to Mme. Birotteau's Grecian profile; and the outlines of her face, finely cut as a cameo, appeared in all their delicate beauty. Césarine, in her white crepe dress, with a wreath of white roses in her hair and a rose at her waist, her shoulders and the outlines of her bodice modestly covered by a scarf, turned Popinot's head.

"These people are eclipsing us," said Mme. Roguin to her husband, as she went through the rooms.

The notary's wife was furious. A woman can always measure the superiority or inferiority of a rival, and Mme. Roguin felt that she was not as beautiful as Mme. César.

"Pooh, not for long. In a little while the poor thing will be ruined, and your carriage will splash the mud on her as she goes afoot through the streets."

Vauquelin's manner was perfect. He came with M. de Lacépède, who had brought his colleague in his carriage. To Mme. César, in her radiant beauty, the two learned Academicians paid compliments in scientific language.

"You possess the secret, unknown to chemistry, of retaining youth and beauty, madame."

"You are in your own house, so to speak, Monsieur l'Academician," said Birotteau. "Yes, Monsieur le Comte," he went on, turning to the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, "I owe my success to Monsieur Vauquelin. I have the honor of presenting to your lordship Monsieur le Président (of the Tribunal of Commerce). That is Monsieur le Comte de Lacépède, a peer of France, and one of the greatest men in France beside; he has written forty volumes," he added, for the benefit of Joseph Lebas, who came with the president.

The guests were punctual. The ordinary tradesman's dinner-party followed, abundant in good humor and merriment, and enlivened by the homely jokes that never fail to provoke laughter. Ample justice was done to the excellent dishes, and the wines were thoroughly appreciated. It was half-past nine before they went into the drawing-room for coffee, and cabs had already begun to arrive with impatient dancers. An hour later the rooms were full, and the dance had become a crush. M. de Lacépède and M. Vauquelin went, in spite of entreaties from César, who followed them despairingly to the staircase. He had better fortune with the elder Popinot and M. de la Billardière, who remained.

With the exception of three women, Mlle. Fontaine, Mme. Jules, and Mme. Rabourdin, who severally represented aristocracy, finance, and official dignities, and by their brilliant beauty, dress, and manner presented a striking contrast to the rest of the assembly, the toilets of the remainder were of the heavy and substantial order, too suggestive of a well-lined purse, which gives to a crowd of citizens' wives and daughters

a certain air of vulgarity, made cruelly prominent in the present case by the daintiness and grace of the three ladies.

The bourgeoisie of the Rue Saint-Denis displayed itself majestically in the full glory of its absurdities carried to the burlesque point. It was that same bourgeoisie, nor more nor less, which tricks its offspring out in the uniform of the Lancers or of the National Guard, that buys "Victories and Conquests," "The Old Soldier at the Plough," and admires "The Pauper's Funeral," which rejoices to go on guard, goes on Sundays to the inevitable country-house, is at pains to acquire a distinguished air, and dreams of municipal honors; the bourgeoisie that looks on every one with jealous eyes, and yet is kindly, helpful, devoted, warm-hearted, and compassionate, ready to subscribe for the orphan children of a General Foy, for the Greeks (all unwitting of their piracies), for the Champ d'Asile when it no longer exists; a bourgeoisie that falls a victim to its own good qualities, and is flouted by a social superiority which marks a real inferiority, for an ignorance of social conventions fosters that native kindliness of heart; a bourgeoisie which brings up frank-hearted daughters inured to work, full of good qualities, which are lost at once if they mingle with the classes above them; a commonsense, matter-of-fact womankind, from among whom the worthy Chrysale should have taken a wife; that bourgeoisie, in short, so admirably represented by the Matifats, the druggists in the Rue des Lombards, who had supplied the Queen of Roses for sixty years.

Mme. Matifat, anxious to appear stately, wore a turban on her head, and was dancing in a heavy poppy-red gown embroidered with gold, a toilet that harmonized with a haughty countenance, a Roman nose, and the splendors of a crimson complexion. Even M. Matifat, so glorious when the National Guard was reviewed, when you might see the chain and bunch of seals blazing on his portly person fifty paces away, was obscured by this Catherine II. of the counting-house; yet her

short, stout, spectacled consort, with his shirt collar almost up to his ears, distinguished himself by his deep bass voice and by the richness of his vocabulary.

He never said "Corneille," but "the sublime Corneille." Racine was the "tender Racine;" Voltaire, oh! Voltaire, "takes the second place in every class, more of a wit than a genius, but nevertheless a man of genius!" Rousseau, "a gloomy, suspicious nature, a man overbrimming with pride, who ended by hanging himself." He related tedious stock anecdotes about Piron, who is looked upon as a prodigious personage among the bourgeoisie. There was a slight tendency to obscenity in Matifat's conversation; he was an infatuated admirer of theatrical divinities; and it was even said of him that, in imitation of old Cardot and the wealthy Camusot, he kept a mistress. Now and then Mme. Matifat would hastily interrupt him on the brink of an anecdote by crying, at the top of her voice, "Mind what you are going to tell us, old man!" In familiar conversation she always addressed him as "old man." The voluminous lady of the Rue des Lombards caused Mlle. de Fontaine's aristocratic countenance to lose its repose; the haughty damsel could not help smiling when she overheard Mme. Matifat say to her husband, "Don't make a rush for the ices, old man; it is bad style!"

It is harder to explain the differences which distinguish the great world from the bourgeoisie than it is for the bourgeoisie to efface them. The women, conscious of their toilets, felt that this was a holiday; they made no attempt to conceal an enjoyment which plainly showed that this ball was a great event in their busy lives; while the three women, each of whom represented a different higher social sphere, were at that moment as they would be on the morrow. They did not seem to be dressed for the occasion, had no desire to behold themselves amid the unaccustomed marvels of their costume, and showed no uneasiness as to its effect, which they had ascertained once and for all as they put the last touches to

their ball-dresses before the mirror; there was no excitement in their faces; they danced with the grace and ease of movement which the forgotten sculptors of a bygone age caught and recorded in their statues. But the others bore the impress of daily toil—toil showed itself in their attitude, in their exaggerated enjoyment; their glances were naïvely curious, their voices were not subdued to the key of the low murmur which gives such an inimitable piquancy to ballroom conversations; and, above all things, they lacked the impertinent gravity which contains the germ of epigram, the repose of manner which marks those whose self-command is perfect. So Mme. Rabourdin, Mme. Jules, and Mlle. de Fontaine, who had expected infinite amusement from this perfumer's ball, stood out against the background of citizens' wives and daughters, conspicuous by their languid grace, by the exquisite taste displayed in their toilets, and by their manner of dancing, even as three principal performers at the opera are set off by the rank and file of supernumeraries on the stage. Jealous and astonished eyes watched them. Mme. Roguin, Constance, and Césarine formed a link, as it were, between these three aristocratic types and the tradesmen's womankind.

At every ball a moment comes when excitement or the torrents of light, the gaiety, the music, and the movement of the dance carries away the dancers, and all the shades of difference are drowned in the *crescendo* of the *tutti*. In a little while the ball would become a romp. Mlle. de Fontaine determined to go; but, as she sought the venerable Vendean leader's arm, Birotteau and his wife and daughter hastened to prevent the defection of the aristocracy of their assembly.

"There is a perfume of good taste about the rooms which really surprises me; I congratulate you upon it," said the insolent girl, addressing the perfumer.

Birotteau was too much intoxicated by the compliments publicly addressed to him to understand this speech; but his wife flushed up and did not know what to answer.

"This is a national festival which does you honor," Camusot said.

"I have seldom seen so fine a ball," said Monsieur de la Billardière, an official fib that cost him nothing.

Birotteau took all the congratulations seriously.

"What a charming sight, and how good the band is! Shall you often give us balls?" asked Mme. Lebas.

"What beautiful rooms! Did you plan them yourself?" inquired Mme. Desmarets, and César ventured on a lie, and allowed it to be thought that he was the originator of the scheme of decoration. Césarine, whose list of partners for the quadrilles was of course filled up, learned how much delicacy there was in Anselme's nature.

"If I only listened to my own wishes," he had said in her ear as they arose from dinner, "I would entreat the favor of a quadrille with you, but my happiness would cost our self-love too dear."

Césarine, who thought all men who walked straight ungraceful in their gait, determined to open the ball with Popinot. Popinot, encouraged by his aunt, who had bade him be bold, dared to speak of his love during the quadrille to the charming girl at his side, but in the roundabout ways that timid lovers take.

"My fortune depends on you, mademoiselle."

"And how?"

"There is but one hope which can give me the power to make it."

"Then hope."

"Do you really know all that you have said in those two words?" asked Popinot.

"Hope for fortune," said Césarine, with a mischievous smile.

As soon as the quadrille was over, Anselme rushed to his friend. "Gaudissart! Gaudissart! succeed, or I shall blow my brains out!" He squeezed his friend's arm in a Hercu-

lean grasp. "Success means that I shall marry Césarine. She has told me so; and see how beautiful she is!"

"Yes, she is prettily rigged out," said Gaudissart; "and she is rich. We will do her in oil."

The good understanding between Mlle. Lourdois and Alexandre Crottat (Roguin's successor-designate) did not escape Mme. Birotteau, who could not give up without a pang the prospect of seeing her daughter the wife of a Paris notary. Uncle Pillerault, after exchanging a greeting with little Molineux, took up his quarters in an easy-chair near the bookcase. Hence he watched the card-players, listened to the talk about him, and went from time to time to the door to look at the moving flower-garden as the dancers' heads swayed in the figures of the quadrille. He turned a truly philosophical countenance on it all. The men were unspeakable, with the exception of du Tillet, who had already learned something of the manners of the fashionable world; of young Billardière, an incipient dandy; M. Jules Desmartes, and the official personages. But among the faces, all more or less comical, which gave the assembly its character, there was one in particular, worn into meaningless smoothness, like the head on a five-franc piece issued by the Republic, but curious by reason of its association with a suit of clothes. This person, it will have been guessed, was none other than the petty tyrant of the Cour Batave, arrayed in fine linen, yellowed with lying-by in the press, displaying a shirt frill of venerable lace, secured by a pin with a bluish cameo. Short breeches of black silk treacherously revealed the spindle shanks on which he dared to repose his weight. César triumphantly took him around the four apartments devised by the architect on the second floor of his house.

"Hey! hey! it is your own affair, sir," said Molineux. "My second floor done up in this way will be worth another thousand crowns."

Birotteau turned this off with a joke, but the little old

man's words and tone had been like the prick of a needle. "I shall soon have my second floor again; this man is ruining himself!" that was the underlying sense of that "*will be worth*," which had been a sudden revelation of Molineux's claws.

The pale, meagre face and cruel eyes struck du Tillet, whose attention had been called to the landlord in the first instance by the watch-chain from which a pound weight of trinkets hung and jingled, the green coat with white threads in it, and the odd-looking, turned-up collar, which gave the old man somewhat the appearance of a rattlesnake. So the banker went over to the little money-lender to learn how he came to be at a merry-making.

"Here, sir," said Molineux, putting a foot into the boudoir, "I am on Monsieur le Comte de Granville's property, but here" (he pointed to the other foot) "I am on my own, for this house belongs to me."

And Molineux, more than willing to gratify the only one who had a mind to listen to him, was so charmed with du Tillet's attentive attitude that he described himself and gave an account of his habits, together with a complete history of the sauciness of Master Gendrin and an exact relation of his transactions with the perfumer, without which transaction the ball would not have taken place.

"Ah! so Monsieur César has paid his rent beforehand," said du Tillet; "nothing is more contrary to his habits."

"Oh! I asked him to do so; I am so accommodating with my tenants!"

"If old Birotteau goes bankrupt," thought du Tillet, "that little rogue will certainly make a capital assignee. Such captiousness is not often met with; he must amuse himself at home, like Domitian, by killing flies when he is alone."

Du Tillet betook himself to the card-tables, where Claparon (by his orders) had already taken his post. Du Tillet thought that, screened by a lamp-shade, at bouillotte, his dummy-

banker would escape all scrutiny. As they sat opposite one another, they looked such perfect strangers that the most suspicious observer could have discovered no sign of an understanding between them. Gaudissart, who knew that Claparon had risen in the world, did not dare to approach him; the wealthy ex-commercial traveler had given him the portentously cool stare of an upstart who does not care to be claimed by an old acquaintance.

Toward five o'clock in the morning the ball came to an end, like a spent rocket. By that time there only remained some forty cabs out of a hundred or more which had filled the Rue Saint-Honoré; and in the ballroom they were dancing the boulangère, which later was succeeded by the cotillon and the English galop. Du Tillet, Roguin, young Cardot, Jules Desmarets, and the Comte de Granville were playing bouillotte. Du Tillet had won three thousand francs. The light of the wax-candles was growing pale in the dawn when the card-players rose to join in the last quadrille.

In bourgeois houses this supreme enjoyment never comes to an end without some enormities. Those who imposed awe or restraint on the others are gone; the intoxication of movement, the hot rooms, the spirits that lurk in the most harmless beverages, relax the stiffness of the dowagers, who allow themselves to be drawn into the quadrilles, and yield to the excitement of the moment; men are heated, the lank hair comes down over their faces, and their grotesque appearance provokes laughter; the younger women grow frivolous, flowers have fallen here and there from their hair. Then it is that the bourgeois Momus enters, followed by his antic crew! Laughter breaks out in peals, and every one gives himself up to the merriment, thinking that with morning labor will resume its sway over him. Matifat was dancing with a woman's hat on his head; Célestin was indulging in burlesque movements. A few of the ladies clapped their hands noisily when they changed the figures of the interminable quadrille.

"How they are enjoying themselves!" said the happy Birotteau.

"If only they break nothing," said Constance, who stood by Uncle Pillerault.

"You have given the most magnificent ball that I have seen, and I have seen many," said du Tillet, with a bow to his late employer.

There is in one of Beethoven's eight symphonies a fantasia like a great poem; it is the culminating point of the *finale* of the symphony in C minor. When, after the slow preparation of the mighty magician, so well understood by Habeneck, the rich curtain rises on this scene; when the bow of the enthusiastic leader of the orchestra calls forth the dazzling *motif*, through which the whole gathered force of the music flows, the poet, as his heart beats fast, will understand that this ball was in Birotteau's life like this moment when his own imagination feels the quickening power of the music, of this *motif*, which in itself, perhaps, raises the symphony in C minor above its glorious sisters. For a radiant fairy springs up and waves her wand, and you hear the rustling of the purple silken curtains raised by angels; the golden doors, carved like the bronze gates of the baptistery in Florence, turn upon their hinges of adamant, and your eyes wander over far-off glories and vistas of fairy palaces. Forms not of this earth glide among them, the incense of prosperity rises, the fire is kindled on the altar of fortune, the scented air circles about it. Beings clad in white blue-bordered tunics smile divinely as they float before your eyes, shapes delicate and ethereal beyond expression turn faces of unearthly beauty upon you. The Loves hover in the air, filling it with the flames of their torches. You feel that you are loved; you are glad with a joy that you drink in without comprehending it as you bathe in the floods of a torrent of harmony which pours out for each the nectar of his choice; for, as the music

slides into your inmost soul, its desires are realized for a moment. Then when you have walked for a while in heaven, the enchanter plunges you back, by some deep and mysterious transition of the bass, into the morass of chill reality, only to draw you thence when he has awakened in you a thirst for his divine melodies, and your soul cries out to hear those sounds again. The history of the soul at the most glorious point in that beautiful *finale* is the history of the sensations which this festival brought in abundance for Constance and César. But it was no Beethoven, but a Collinet, who had composed upon his flute the *finale* of their commercial symphony.

The three Birotteaus, tired but happy, slept that morning with the sounds of the festival ringing in their ears. The building, repairs, furniture, banquets, toilets, and Césarine's library (for the money had been repaid her) had altogether raised the expense of that entertainment, without César having a suspicion of it, to sixty thousand francs. So much did that luckless red ribbon, fastened by the King to a perfumer's button-hole, cost the wearer. If any misfortune should befall César Birotteau, this extravagance of his was like to bring him into serious trouble at the police court; a merchant lays himself open to a term of two years' imprisonment if, on examination, his expenses are considered excessive. It is, perhaps, more unpleasant to go to the sixth chamber for simple bad management or for a foolish trifle, than to come before a court of assize for a gigantic fraud; and in some people's eyes it is better to be a knave than a fool.

II.

CÉSAR STRUGGLES WITH MISFORTUNE.

A week after the ball, that final flare of the straw-fire of a prosperity which had lasted for eighteen years and now was about to die out in darkness, César stood watching the passers-by through his store window. He was thinking of the wide extent of his business affairs, and found them almost more than he could manage. Hitherto his life had been quite simple; he manufactured and sold his goods, or he bought to sell again. But now there was the speculation in building land, and his own share in the enterprise of A. Popinot & Company, beside a hundred and sixty thousand francs' worth of bills to meet. Before long he would be compelled to discount some of his customers' bills (and his wife would not like it), or there must be an unheard-of success on Popinot's part; altogether, the poor man had so many things to think of that he felt as if he had more skeins to wind than he could hold.

How would Anselme steer his course? Birotteau treated Popinot much as a professor of rhetoric treats a student; he felt little confidence in his capacity, and was sorry that he could not be always on hand to look after him. The admonitory kick bestowed on Anselme's shins by way of a recommendation to hold his tongue in Vauquelin's presence will illustrate the fears which the perfumer felt as to the newly started business. Birotteau was very careful to hide his thoughts from his wife and daughter and from his assistant; but within himself he felt as a Seine boatman might feel if by some freak of fortune a minister should give him the command of a frigate. Such thoughts as these, rising like a fog in his brain,

were but little favorable to clear thinking; he stood, therefore, trying to see things distinctly in his own mind.

Just at that moment a figure, for which he felt an intense aversion, appeared in the street; he beheld his second landlord, little Molineux. Everybody knows those dreams in which events are so crowded together that we pass through a whole lifetime, dreams in which a fantastical being reappears from time to time, always as the bearer of bad-tidings—the villain of the piece. It seemed to Birotteau that fate had sent Molineux to play a similar part in his waking life. That countenance had grinned diabolically at him when the feast was at its height, and had turned an evil eye on the splendor; and now, when César saw it again, he remembered the impression which the "little curmudgeon" (to use his own expression) had given him but so much the more vividly, because Molineux had given him a fresh feeling of repulsion by suddenly breaking in upon his musings.

"Sir," said the little old man in his vampire's voice, "we did this business in such an off-hand fashion that you forgot to approve the additions to this little private covenant of ours."

As Birotteau took up the lease to repair the omission, the architect came in, bowed to the perfumer, and hovered about him with a diplomatic air.

"You know, sir, the difficulties at the outset when you are starting in business," he said at last in Birotteau's ear; "you are satisfied with me; you would oblige me very much by paying my honorarium at once."

Birotteau, who had paid away all his ready money and emptied his portfolio, told Célestin to draw a bill for two thousand francs at three months and a form of receipt.

"It is a very lucky thing for me that you undertook to pay the quarter which your next-door neighbor owed," said Molineux, with malicious cunning in his smile. "My porter has been around to tell me that the authorities have been affixing

seals to his property, because Master Cayron has disappeared from the scene."

"If only they don't come down on me for the five thousand francs!" thought Birotteau.

"People thought that he was doing very well," said Lourdois, who had just come in to hand his statement to the perfumer.

"No one in business is quite safe from reverses until he retires," remarked little Molineux, folding up his document with punctilious neatness.

The architect watched the little old creature with the pleasure that every artist feels at the sight of a living caricature which confirms his prejudices against the bourgeoisie.

"When you hold an umbrella over your head, you generally suppose that it is sheltered if it rains," he observed.

Molineux looked harder at the architect's mustache and "imperial" than at his face, and the contempt that he felt for Grindot quite equaled Grindot's contempt for him. He stayed on to give the architect a parting scratch. By dint of living with his cats there had come to be something feline in Molineux's ways as well as in his eyes.

Just at that moment Ragon and Pillerault came in together.

"We have been talking over this business with the judge," Ragon said in César's ear. "He says that in a speculation of this kind we must actually complete the purchase and have a receipt from the vendors if we are really to be severally propriet——"

"Oh! are you in the affair of the Madeleine?" asked Lourdois. "People are talking about it; there will be houses to build!"

The house-painter had come to ask for a prompt settlement, but he found it to his interest not to press the perfumer.

"I have sent in my statement because it is the end of the year," he said in a low voice for César's benefit; "I do not want anything."

"Well, what is it, César?" asked Pillerault, noticing his nephew's surprise; for César, overcome by the sight of the statement, made no answer to either Ragon or Lourdois.

"Oh! a trifle; I took five thousand francs of bills from a neighbor, the umbrella dealer, who is bankrupt. If he has given me bad paper, I shall be caught like a simpleton."

"Why, I told you so long ago," cried Ragon; "a drowning man will catch hold of his father's leg to save himself, and drag him down with him. I have seen so much of bankruptcies! A man is not exactly a rogue to begin with; but, when he gets into trouble, he is forced to become one."

"True," said Pillerault.

"Ah! if I ever get as far as the Chamber of Deputies, or have some influence with Government——" said Birotteau, rising on tiptoe and sinking back again on his heels.

"What will you do?" asked Lourdois. "You are a wise man."

Molineux, always interested by a discussion on law, stayed in the store to listen; and, as the attention paid by others is infectious, Pillerault and Ragon, who knew César's opinions, listened none the less with as much gravity as the three strangers.

"I should have a Tribunal and a permanent bench of judges," said César, "and a public prosecutor for criminal cases. After an examination, made by a judge who should discharge the functions of agents by procuration trustees and registrar, the trader should be declared *temporarily insolvent* or a *fraudulent bankrupt*. In the first case, he should be bound over to pay his creditors in full; to that end, he should be trustee for his own and his wife's property (for everything he had, or might inherit, would belong to his creditors); he should manage his estate for their benefit and under their inspection; in fact, he should carry on the business for them, signing his name, in every case, as 'such a one, in liquidation,' until everybody was paid in full. But if he were made a bank-

rupt, he should be condemned to stand in the pillory in the Exchange for a couple of hours, as they used to do, with a green cap on his head. His own property and his wife's, and his interest in any other estate, should be forfeit to his creditors, and he should be banished the kingdom."

"Business would be a little safer," said Lourdois; "people would think twice before going into a speculation."

"The law as it stands is never carried out," cried César, lashing himself up; "more than fifty merchants out of a hundred could only pay seventy-five per cent., or they sell goods at twenty-five per cent. below invoice price and spoil trade in that way."

"Monsieur Birotteau is in the right," said Molineux; "the law allows far too much latitude. The entire estate should be made over to the creditors, or the man should be disgraced."

"Bother take it," said César, "at the rate at which things are going, a merchant will become a licensed robber. By signing his name he can dip in any one's purse."

"You are severe, Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois.

"He is right," said old Ragon.

"Every man who fails is a suspicious character," César went on, exasperated by the little loss which rang in his ears; it was like the huntsman's first distant halloo to a stag.

As he spoke, Chevet's steward brought his invoice, a pastry-cook's boy from Félix and the Café Foy arrived, together with the clarionet-player of Collinet's band, each with an account.

"The 'Rabelais' quarter-of-an-hour,' " smiled Ragon.

"My word, that was a splendid fête of yours," said Lourdois.

"I am busy," César said, and the messengers departed, leaving their invoices.

"Monsieur Grindot," said Lourdois, who noticed that the architect was folding up a bill which bore César's signature, "you will check my account and see that it is all in order;

you need do nothing more than run through it, all the prices have been agreed to on Monsieur Birotteau's behalf."

Pillerault looked at Lourdois and Grindot.

"If architect and contractor settle the prices between them, you are being robbed," he said in his nephew's ear.

Grindot went out. Molineux followed and came up to him with a mysterious expression.

"Sir," he remarked, "you heard what I said, but you did not take my meaning; I wish you an umbrella when it comes on to rain."

Fear seized on Grindot. A man clings all the more tightly to gain which is not lawfully his; such is human nature. As a matter of fact, too, this had been a labor of love for the artist; he had given all his time and his utmost skill to the alterations of the rooms; he had done five times as much as he had been paid for, and had fallen a victim to his own self-love. The contractors had had little difficulty in tempting him. And, beside the irresistible argument, there was a menace, understood though not expressed, of doing him an injury by slandering him, and there was a yet more cogent reason for yielding—the remark that Lourdois made as to the building land near the Madeleine. Clearly, Birotteau did not mean to put up a single house; he was only speculating in land.

Architects and contractors are in somewhat the same relative positions as actors and dramatists; they are dependent on each other. Grindot, to whom Birotteau left the settlement of the charges, was for the handicraftsman as against the citizen-householder. So the end of it was that three large contractors—Lourdois, Chaffaroux, and Thorien the carpenter—declared him to be "one of those good fellows for whom it is a pleasure to work." Grindot foresaw that the accounts on which he was to have his share would be paid, like his own fee, by bills; and this little old man had given him doubts as to whether those bills would be met. Grindot was prepared

to show no mercy; after the manner of artists, the most ruthless enemies of the bourgeois.

By the end of December, César had invoices for sixty thousand francs. Félix, the Café Foy, Tanrade, and others, to whom small amounts were owing which must be paid in cash, had sent three times for the money. In business these small trifles do more harm than a heavy loss; they set rumors in circulation. A loss which every one knows is a definite thing, but panic knows no limits. Birotteau's safe was empty.

Then fear seized on the perfumer. Such a thing had never happened before in his business career. Like all people who have almost forgotten their struggles with poverty, and have little strength of character, this incident—a daily occurrence in the lives of most petty storekeepers in Paris—troubled César's brain.

He told Célestin to send in invoices to his own customers; such an unheard-of order had to be repeated twice before the astonished first assistant understood it. The "clients"—the grand name that storekeepers used to apply to their customers, and retained by César in speaking of them, in spite of his wife, who had yielded at last with a "Call them what you like, so long as they pay us"—the "clients" were wealthy people, who paid when they pleased; in César's business there were no bad debts, though the outstanding accounts often amounted to fifty or sixty thousand francs. The second assistant took the invoice-book and began to copy out the largest amounts. César stood in fear of his wife. He did not wish her to see his prostration beneath the simoom of misfortune, so he determined to go out.

"Good-day, sir," said Grindot, coming in with the careless air that artists assume when they talk of business matters, to which they say they are entirely unaccustomed. "I cannot obtain ready money of any sort or description for your paper, so I am compelled to ask you to give me cash instead. It is a most unfortunate thing for me that I must take this step;

but I have not been to the money-lenders about it; I should not like to hawk your name about; I know enough of business to know that it would be casting a slur on it; so it is to your own interest to——"

"Speak lower, sir, if you please," said Birotteau in bewilderment. "I am very much surprised at this."

Lourdois came in.

"Here, Lourdois," said Birotteau with a smile, "do you know about this?——" he stopped short. With the good faith of a merchant who feels secure, the poor man had been about to ask Lourdois to take Grindot's bill, by way of laughing at the architect; but he saw a cloud on Lourdois' brow, and trembled at his own imprudence. The harmless joke was the death-knell of a credit not above suspicion. In such a case a rich merchant takes back his bill; he does not offer it. Birotteau felt dizzy; it was as if a stroke of a pick-axe had laid open the pit which yawned at his feet.

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois, retiring with him to the back of the store, "my account has been checked and passed; I must ask you to have the money ready for me by to-morrow. My daughter is going to be married to young Crottat; he wants money, and notaries will not wait and bargain; beside, no one has ever seen my name on a bill."

"You can send round the day after to-morrow," said Birotteau stiffly (he counted on the payment of the invoices). "And you also, sir," he spoke to Grindot.

"Why can I not have it at once?" asked the architect.

"I have my men's wages to pay in the Faubourg," said César, who had never told a lie.

He took up his hat to go with them; but the bricklayer came in with Thorien and Chaffaroux, and stopped him just as he shut the door.

"We really want the money, sir," said Chaffaroux.

"Eh! I haven't the wealth of the Indies," cried César,

out of patience; and he quickly put a hundred paces between himself and the three visitors. "There is something underneath all this. Confound the ball! Everybody takes you for a millionaire. Still, there was something very strange about Lourdois," he thought; "there is some snake in the hedge."

He went along the Rue Saint-Honoré without thinking where he was going, feeling at a very low ebb, when at a corner of the street he ran up against Alexandre Crottat, like a battering-ram, or as one mathematician absorbed in the working of a problem might collide with another.

"Ah! sir," exclaimed the future notary, "one word with you! Did Roguin pay over your four hundred thousand francs to Monsieur Claparon?"

"You were there when the thing was done. Claparon gave me no receipt of any kind; my bills were to be negotiated. Roguin ought to have paid them to him—— my two hundred and forty thousand francs in coin. He was told that the money was to be paid down and the transaction completed. Popinot of the Tribunal says—— The vendor's receipt! But—— what makes you ask the question?"

"What makes me ask you such a question? To know whether your two hundred thousand francs are in Claparon's hands or Roguin's. Roguin is such an old acquaintance of yours that he might have scrupled to take your money, and handed it over to Claparon; if so, you will have had a narrow escape! But how stupid I am! He has made off with them, for he has Claparon's money; luckily, Claparon had only paid a hundred thousand francs. Roguin has absconded; I myself paid him a hundred thousand francs for his practice without taking a receipt; I gave it him as I might give my purse to you to keep for me. Your vendors have not been paid a stiver; they have just been round to see me. The money you raised on your land has no existence for you, nor for the man of whom you borrowed it; Roguin had swallowed it like

your hundred thousand francs; which er—he has not had this long while. And he has taken your last payment of a hundred thousand francs with him too; I remember going to the bank for the money."

The pupils of César's eyes dilated so widely that he could see nothing but red flames before him.

"Your draft on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, a hundred thousand francs of mine paid for the practice, and a hundred thousand francs belonging to M. Claparon—three hundred thousand francs gone like smoke, to say nothing of the defalcations that have yet to be found out," the young notary went on. "They feared for Madame Roguin's life; Monsieur du Tillet spent the night beside her. Du Tillet himself has had a narrow escape! Roguin has been pestering him this month past to draw him into the Madeleine speculation, but, luckily, all his capital was locked up in some project of the Nucingens. Roguin wrote his wife a frightful letter. I have just seen it. For five years he has been gambling with his clients' money, and why? To spend it on a mistress—the Beautiful Dutchwoman; he left her a fortnight before he made this stroke. She had squandered till she had not a farthing; her furniture was sold; she had put her name on bills of exchange. Then she hid from her creditors in a house in the Palais-Royal, and was murdered there last evening by an officer in the army. Heaven soon dealt the punishment to her who, beyond a doubt, had run through Roguin's fortune. There are women to whom nothing is sacred; think of squandering away a notary's practice!

"Madame Roguin will having nothing except what has been secured to her by her legal mortgage, and all the scoundrel's property has been mortgaged beyond its value. The practice is to be sold for three hundred thousand francs! And I, who thought I was doing a good stroke of business, must begin by paying an extra hundred thousand francs for my practice; I hold no receipt; and there are defalcations

which will eat up the value of the practice and the deposit of caution-money. The creditors will think that I am in it if I say anything about my hundred thousand francs, and you have to be very careful of your reputation when you are beginning for yourself. You will hardly get thirty per cent. Such a brew to drink of at my age! That a man of fifty-nine should take up with a woman. The old rogue! Three weeks ago he told me not to marry Césarine, and said that before long you would not have bread to eat, the monster!"

Alexandre might have talked on for a long while; Birotteau stood like a man turned to stone. Each sentence fell like a stunning blow. He heard nothing in the sounds but his death-knell; just as when Alexandre first began to speak, he had seemed to see his own house in flames. He looked so white and stood so motionless that Alexandre Crottat, who had taken the worthy perfumer for a clear-headed, capable man of business, was frightened at last. Roguin's successor did not know that this stroke had swept away César's whole fortune. A swift thought of suicide flashed through the brain of the merchant, so profoundly religious by nature. In such a case suicide is a way of escape from a thousand deaths, and it seems logical to accept but one. Alexandre Crottat lent his arm and tried to walk with him, but it was impossible—César tottered as if he had been drunk.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Crottat. "My good Monsieur César, pluck up heart a little! It takes more than this to kill a man! Beside you will recover forty thousand francs; the man who lent you the money had not the money to lend, and did not pay it over to you; you might plead that the contract was void."

"My ball. My cross. Two hundred thousand francs' worth of my paper on the market, and not anything in the safe to—— The Ragons, Pillerault—— And my wife, who saw it all!"

A shower of confused words, which called up ideas that

overwhelmed him and caused unspeakable pangs, fell like hail laying waste the flower-beds of the Queen of Roses.

"If only my head were cut of," Birotteau cried at last; "it is so heavy that it weighs me down, and it is good for nothing in this——"

"Poor old Birotteau!" said Alexandre; "then are you in difficulties?"

"Difficulties!"

"Very well; keep up your heart and struggle with them."

"Struggle!" echoed the perfumer.

"Du Tillet used to be your assistant; he has a level head, he will help you."

"Du Tillet?"

"Come along!"

"Good heavens! I don't like to go home like this," cried Birotteau. "You that are my friend, if friends there are, you who have dined with me, you in whom I have taken an interest, call a cab for me, for my wife's sake; and come with me, Xandrot——"

With no little difficulty Crottat put the inert mechanism, called César, into a cab.

"Xandrot," he said, in a voice broken with tears, for the tears had begun to fall and the iron band about his head seemed to be loosened a little, "let us call at the store. Speak to Célestin for me. My friend, tell him that it is a matter of life and death for me and for my wife. And let no one prattle about Roguin's disappearance on any pretext whatever. Ask Césarine to come down, and beg her to allow no one to say anything about it to her mother. You must beware of your best friends, Pillerault, the Ragons, everybody——"

The change in Birotteau's voice made a deep impression on Crottat, who understood the importance of the request. On their way to the magistrate they stopped at the house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Célestin and Césarine were horrified to

see Birotteau lying back in white and speechless hebetude, as it were, in the cab.

"Keep the affair a secret for me," said the perfumer.

"Ah!" said Xandrot to himself, "he is coming round; I thought it was all over with him."

The conference between Alexandre and the magistrate lasted long. The president of the Chamber of Notaries was sent for; César was taken hither and thither like a parcel; he did not stir, he did not utter a word. Toward seven o'clock in the evening Alexandre Crottat took the perfumer home again, and the thought of appearing before his wife had a bracing effect upon César. The young notary had the charity to precede him, to tell Mme. Birotteau that her husband had had a sort of fit.

"His ideas are confused," he said, making a gesture to describe a bewildered state of the brain; "perhaps he should be bled or leeches ought to be put on him."

"I knew how it would be," said Constance—nothing was further from her thoughts than the actual disaster—"he did not take his medicine as usual at the beginning of winter, and for these two months he has been working like a galley slave, as if he had to earn his daily bread."

So César's wife and daughter begged him to go to bed, and Dr. Haudry, Birotteau's doctor, was sent for. Old Haudry was a doctor of the school of Molière; he had a large practice, and adhered to old-fashioned methods and out-of-date formulæ; consulting-physician though he was, he drugged his patients like any quack doctor. He came, made his diagnosis, and ordered the immediate application of a sinapism to the soles of César's feet; he detected symptoms of cerebral congestion.

"What can have brought it on?" asked Constance.

"The damp weather," said the doctor. Césarine had given him a hint.

A doctor is often obliged professionally to talk nonsense

with a learned air, to save the honor or the life of persons in health who stand about the patient's bed. The old physician had seen so much that half a word sufficed for him. Césarine went out with the doctor on to the stairs to ask about the treatment.

"Rest and quiet; then when there is less pressure on the head, we will venture on tonics."

For two days Mme. César sat by her husband's bedside. Often she thought that he was delirious. As he lay in his wife's pretty blue-chamber he said many things, which were enigmas for Constance, at the sight of the hangings, the furniture, and the costly magnificence of the room.

"He is light-headed," she said to Césarine, when César sat upright in bed and began solemnly to repeat scraps of the Code. "If the personal or household expenses are considered excessive—— Take away those curtains!" he cried.

After three dreadful days of anxiety for César's reason, the Tourangeau's strong peasant constitution triumphed, the pressure on the brain ceased. M. Haudry ordered cordials and a strengthening diet, and, after a cup of coffee seasonably administered, César was on his feet again. Constance, worn out, took her husband's place.

"Poor thing!" said César, when he saw her sleeping.

"Come, papa, take courage! You have so much talent, that you will triumph over this. Never mind. Monsieur Anselme will help you," and Césarine murmured the sweet, vague words, made still sweeter by tenderness, which put courage into the most sorely defeated, as a mother's crooning songs soothe the pain of a teething infant.

"Yes, child, I will struggle. But not a word of this to any one whatever; not to Popinot, who loves us, nor to your uncle. In the first place, I will write to my brother; he is a canon, I believe, a priest attached to a cathedral. He spends nothing, so he must have saved something. Five thousand francs put by every year for twenty years—

he ought to have a hundred thousand francs. Priests have credit in country places."

Césarine, in her hurry to set a little table and the necessaries for writing a letter before her father, brought the remainder of the rose-colored cards for the ball.

"Burn them all!" cried the merchant. "The devil alone could have put the notion of that ball into my head. If I fail, it will look as if I were a rogue. Come, let us go straight to the point."

César's Letter to François Birotteau.

"My dear Brother:—My business is passing through a crisis so difficult that I implore you to send me all the money at your disposal, even if you are obliged to borrow. Yours truly, Cesar.

"Your niece, Césarine, who is with me as I write this letter, while my poor wife is asleep, desires to be remembered to you, and sends her love."

This postscript was added at Césarine's instance. She gave the letter to Raguet.

"Father," said she when she came up again, "here is Monsieur Lebas, who wants to speak to you."

"M. Lebas!" cried César, starting as though misfortune had made a criminal of him, "a judge!"

"Dear Monsieur Birotteau," said the stout merchant-draper as he came in, "I take too deep an interest in you—knowing each other so long as we have, and being elected judges together, as we were, for the first time—not to let you know that one Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, has bills of yours made payable to his order, *without guarantee*, by the firm of Claparon. Those two words are not merely an insult; they give a fatal shake to your credit."

"Monsieur Claparon would like to speak with you," said Célestin, putting in his head; "am I to show him up?"

"We shall soon hear the why and wherefore of this affront," remarked Lebas.

"This is Monsieur Lebas, sir," said César, as Claparon came in; "he is a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and my friend——"

"Oh! the gentleman is Monsieur Lebas, is he?" said Claparon, interrupting César; "delighted to make his acquaintance; Monsieur Lebas of the Tribunal, there are so many Lebas,* to say nothing of the *hauts* (high) and the *bas* (low)——"

"He has seen the bills which I gave to you, and which (so you told me) should not be negotiated," Birotteau went on, interrupting the rattle in his turn; "he has seen them, too, with the words 'without guarantee' written upon them."

"Well," said Claparon, "and as a matter of fact they will not be negotiated; they are in the hands of a man with whom I do a great deal of business—old Bidault. That is why I put 'without guarantee' on them. If the bills had been meant to be put in circulation, you would have made them to his order in the first place. Monsieur Lebas, as a judge, will understand my position. What do the bills represent? The price of some landed property. To be paid by whom? By Birotteau. Why would you have me guarantee Birotteau by my signature? We must, each of us, pay our share of the aforesaid price. Now isn't it enough to be jointly and severally responsible to the vendors? I have made an inflexible rule in business: I no more give my signature for nothing than I give a receipt for money that is still to be paid. I assume the worst. Who signs, pays. I don't want to be laid open to pay three times over."

"Three times," said César.

* *Le bas:* the low.

"Yes, sir," said Claparon. "I have already guaranteed Birotteau to the vendors; why should I guarantee him again to the bill-discounter? Our case is a hard one; Roguin goes off with a hundred thousand francs of mine; so, even now, my half of the land is costing me five hundred thousand instead of four. Roguin has taken two hundred and forty thousand francs belonging to Birotteau. What would you do in my place, Monsieur Lebas? Put yourself in my shoes. I have not the honor of being known to you, any more than I know Monsieur Birotteau. Do you take me? We go halves in a business speculation. You pay down all your share of the money in cash; and, as for me, I give bills for my share. I offer you the bills, and out of excessive benevolence you take them and give money for them. You learn that Claparon, the rich banker, looked up to by every one—I accept all the virtues in the world—that the virtuous Claparon is in difficulties for a matter of six millions; would you select that moment to give your name as a guarantee for mine? You would be mad! Well now, Monsieur Lebas, Birotteau is in the position in which I imagined Claparon to be. Don't you see that in that case, being jointly and severally responsible, I may be made to pay the purchasers; that I can be called upon to pay a second time for Birotteau's share to the extent of his bills; that is, if I back them, without having——"

"Pay whom?" interrupted the perfumer.

"Without having his half of the land," pursued Claparon, heedless of the interruption, "for I should have no hold on him; so I should have to buy it over again. So—I might pay three times over."

"Repay whom?" insisted Birotteau,

"Why, the holder of the bills; if I endorsed them, and you came to grief."

"I shall not fail, sir," said Birotteau.

"All right," said Claparon. "You have been a judge, you are a clever man of business, you know that we ought to pro-

vide for all contingencies, so do not be astonished if I act in a business-like way."

"Monsieur Claparon is right," said Joseph Lebas.

"I am right," continued Claparon, "right from a business point of view. But this is a question of landed property. Now, what ought I myself to receive? Money, for the vendors must be paid in coin. Let us set aside the two hundred and forty thousand francs, which Monsieur Birotteau will find, I am sure," said Claparon, looking at Lebas. "I came to ask you for the trifling sum of twenty-five thousand francs," he added, looking at Birotteau.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" cried César, and it seemed to him that the blood turned to ice in his veins. "But, sir, what for?"

"Eh! my dear sir, we are bound to sign, seal, and deliver the deeds in the presence of a notary. Now, as to paying for the land, we may arrange that among ourselves, but when the Treasury comes in—your humble servant! The Treasury does not amuse itself with idle words; it allows you credit from your hand to your pocket, and we shall have to come down with the money—forty-four thousand francs this week in law expenses. I was far from expecting reproaches when I came here; for, thinking that you might find it inconvenient to pay twenty-five thousand francs, I was going to tell you that by the merest chance I had saved for you——"

"What?" asked Birotteau, giving in that word that cry of distress which no man can mistake.

"A trifle! Twenty-five thousand francs in bills given to you by one and another, which Roguin gave me to discount. I have credited you with the amount as against the registration and other expenses; I will send you the account; there is a little matter to deduct for discounting them, and six or seven thousand francs will still be owing to me."

"This all seems to me to be perfectly fair," said Lebas. "In the place of this gentleman, who appears to me to un-

derstand business very well, I should act the same toward a stranger."

"This will not be the death of Monsieur Birotteau," said Claparon; "it takes more than one blow to kill an old wolf; I have seen wolves with bullets in their heads running about like—Lord, yes, like wolves."

"Who could have foreseen such rascality on Roguin's part?" asked Lebas, as much alarmed by César's dumbness as by so vast a speculation outside the perfumery trade.

"A little more, and I should have given this gentleman a receipt for four hundred thousand francs," said Claparon, "and I was in a stew. I had paid over a hundred thousand francs to Roguin the night before. Our mutual confidence saved me. It would have seemed to us all a matter of indifference whether the money should be lying at his office or in my possession till the day when the contracts were completed."

"It would have been much better if each had deposited his money with the Bank of France till the time came for paying it over," said Lebas.

"Roguin was as good as the bank, I thought," said César. "But he, too, is in this business," he added, looking at Claparon.

"Yes, for a fourth, and in name only," answered Claparon. "After the imbecility of allowing him to go off with my money, there is but one thing more out-and-out idiotic—and that would be to make him a present of some more. If he sends me back my hundred thousand francs, and two hundred thousand more on his own account, then we shall see! But he will take good care not to put the money into an affair that must simmer for four years before you have a spoonful of soup. If he has only gone off with three hundred thousand francs, as they say, he will want quite fifty thousand livres a year to live decently abroad."

"The bandit!"

"Eh! goodness! An infatuation for a woman brought

Roguin to that pass," said Claparon. "What man at his age can answer for it that he will not be mastered and carried away by a last fancy? Not one of us, sober as we are, can tell where it will end. A last love is the most violent. Look at Cardot, and Camusot, and Matifat—every one of them has a mistress! And if all of us are gulled, is it not our own fault? How was it that we did not suspect a notary who speculated on his own account? Any notary, any bill-broker, or stock-broker who does business on his own account, is not to be trusted. Failure for them is fraudulent bankruptcy; they are sent up to the court of assize for trial; so, of course, they prefer a foreign court. I shall not make that blunder again. Well, well, we are all too weak to pass judgment by default on a man with whom we have dined, who has given grand balls, a man in society, in fact! Nobody complains; it is wrong."

"Very wrong," said Birotteau. "The provisions of the law with regard to liquidations and insolvency ought to be revised throughout."

"If you should happen to need me," said Lebas, turning himself to and addressing Birotteau, "I am quite at your service."

"Monsieur Birotteau has need of no one," said the indefatigable prattler (du Tillet had opened the sluices after pouring in the water, and Claparon was repeating a lesson which du Tillet had very skillfully taught him). "His position is clear. Roguin's estate will pay a dividend of fifty per cent., from what young Crottat tells me. Beside the dividend, Monsieur César will come by the forty thousand francs which the lender on the mortgage did not pay over; he can raise more money on his property; and we have four months in which to pay two hundred thousand francs to the vendors. Between now and then Monsieur Birotteau will meet his bills (for he ought not to reckon on meeting them with the money which Roguin made off with). But if Monsieur Birotteau

should find himself a little pinched—— well, with one or two accommodation bills, he will pull through."

The perfumer took heart as he listened. Claparon analyzed the business, summed it up, and traced out a plan of action, as it were, for him. Gradually his expression grew decided and resolute, and he conceived a great respect for the ex-commercial traveler's business capacity. Du Tillet had thought it expedient to make Claparon believe that he was one of Roguin's victims. He had given Claparon a hundred thousand francs to give to Roguin, who returned them to du Tillet. Claparon, being uneasy, played his part to the life; he told anybody who cared to listen to him that Roguin had mulcted him of a hundred thousand francs. Du Tillet doubted Claparon's strength of mind; he fancied that principles of honesty and conscientious scruples still lingered in his puppet, and would not confide the whole of his plans to him; he knew, moreover, that his instrument was incapable of guessing at them.

A day came when his commercial go-between reproached him. "If our first friend is not our first dupe, we should never find the second," said du Tillet to the dissipated Claparon, and he broke in pieces the tool which was no longer useful.

M. Lebas and Claparon went out together, and Birotteau was left alone.

"I can pull through," he said to himself. "My liabilities, in the shape of bills to be met, amount to two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs. That is to say—seventy-five thousand francs for the house and a hundred and seventy-five thousand francs for the building land. Now, to cover this, I have Roguin's dividend, which will amount may be to a hundred thousand francs; and I can cancel the loan on my land, that is a hundred and forty thousand francs in all. The thing to be done is to make a hundred thousand francs by the Cephalic Oil; and a few accommodation bills or a

loan from a banker will tide me over until I can make good the loss and the building land reaches its enhanced value."

When a man in misfortune can once weave a romance of hope out of the more or less solid reasonings with which he fills the pillow on which he lays his head, he is often saved. Many a one has taken the confidence given by an illusion for energy. Perhaps the half of courage is really hope, and the Catholic religion reckons hope among the virtues. Has not hope buoyed up many a weakling, giving him time to await the chances which life brings?

Birotteau made up his mind to apply, in the first place, to his wife's uncle, and to disclose his position to his relative before going elsewhere. He went down the Rue Saint-Honoré and reached the Rue Bourdonnais, not without experiencing inward pangs, which caused such violent internal disturbance that he thought his health was deranged. There was a fire in his vitals. As a matter of fact, those whose sentience is keenest in the diaphragm suffer in that region; just as those whose faculty of perception resides in the brain suffer in the head. In grave crises the system is attacked at the point where the temperament locates the seat of life in the individual; weaklings have the colic, a Napoleon grows drowsy.

Before a man of honor can storm a confidence and overleap the barriers of pride, he must have felt the prick of the spur of Necessity, that hard rider, more than once. So for two days Birotteau had borne that spurring before he went to see Pillerault, and then family reasons decided him—however things might go, he must explain the position to the stern hardware man. Yet, for all that, when he reached the door he felt in his inmost soul as a child feels on a visit to the dentist, that his courage was sinking away; and Birotteau was not about to face a momentary pang, he quailed before a whole lifetime to come. Slowly he went up the stairs, and found the old man reading the "Constitutionnel" by the fireside; on a

little round table his frugal breakfast was set—a roll, butter, Brie cheese, and a cup of coffee.

"There is real wisdom," said Birotteau to himself, and he envied his uncle's life.

"Well," said Pillerault, laying down his spectacles, "I heard about Roguin's affair yesterday at the Café David; so his mistress, the Beautiful Dutchwoman, is murdered! I hope that, warned by us who want to be actual proprietors, you have been to Claparon and taken a receipt?"

"Alas! uncle, that is just it; you have laid your finger on the spot. No."

"Oh, bother! you are ruined," said Pillerault, dropping his paper; and Birotteau picked it up, although it was the "Constitutionnel."

This thought was such a shock that Pillerault's stern features, always like a profile on a coin, grew hard as if they had been struck in bronze. He stared with steady eyes that saw nothing, through the windows, at the opposite wall, and listened while Birotteau poured out a long discourse. Evidently while he heard he deliberated; he was pondering the case with the inflexibility of a Minos who crossed the Styx of commerce, when he left the Quai des Morfondos for his little fourth-floor dwelling.

"Well, uncle?" asked Birotteau at last, expecting some answer to a final entreaty to sell *rentes* worth sixty thousand francs a year.

"Well, my poor nephew, I cannot do it. Things have gone too far. We, the Ragons and I, shall both lose fifty thousand francs. It was by my advice that the good folk sold their shares in the Worstchin Mines. I feel myself bound, if they lose the money, not to replace their capital, but to give them a helping hand, and to help my niece and Césarine. You might, perhaps, all of you want bread, and you must come to me——"

"Bread, uncle?"

"Well, yes, bread. Just look the facts in the face: *you will not pull through!* Out of five thousand six hundred francs a year, I will set aside four thousand to divide between you and the Ragons. When your disaster comes, I know Constance, she will slave and deny herself everything—and so will you, César!"

"There is yet hope, uncle."

"I do not see it as you do."

"I will prove the contrary."

"Nothing would please me better."

Birotteau went without an answer for Pillerault. He had come to find comfort and encouragement, he had received a second blow; a blow less heavy than the first one, it is true; but whereas the first had been dealt at his head, this thrust had gone to his heart, and the poor man's life lay in his affections. He had gone down part of the way, and then he turned and went up again.

"Sir," he said, in a constrained voice, "Constance knows nothing of this, keep the secret for me at least; and beg the Ragons not to disturb the peace that I need if I am to fight against misfortune."

Pillerault made a sign of assent.

"Take courage, César," he said. "I see that you are angry with me, but some day you will acknowledge that I am right, when you think of your wife and daughter."

Discouraged by this opinion given by his uncle, whose clear-headedness he acknowledged, César suddenly dropped from the heights of hope into the miry slough of uncertainty. When a man's affairs take an ugly turn like this he is apt to become the plaything of circumstances, unless he is of Pillerault's temper; he follows other people's ideas, or his own, much as a wayfarer pursues a will-o'-the-wisp. He allows himself to be swept away by the whirlwind when he should either lie prostrate with his eyes shut, and let it pass over him, or rise and watch the direction that it takes, to escape the blast. In

the midst of his anguish, Birotteau bethought himself of the necessary steps to be taken with regard to his loan. He went to see Derville, a consulting barrister in the Rue Vivienne, so as to set about it the sooner, if Derville should see any chance of canceling the contract. Him he found sitting, wrapped in his white flannel dressing-gown, by the fireside, staid and self-possessed, as is the wont of men of law, accustomed as they are to the most harrowing disclosures. Birotteau felt, as a new thing in his experience, this necessary coolness; it was like ice to an excited man like Birotteau telling the story of his misfortunes, smarting from the wounds that he had received, stricken with the fever induced by the risks his fortunes were running, and cruelly beset, since honor and life and wife and child were all imperiled.

"If it is proved," said Derville, when he had heard him out, "that the lender no longer had in Roguin's keeping the sum of money which Roguin induced you to borrow of him, as there has been no transfer of the actual money, the contract might be annulled, and the lender will have his remedy (as you also will have for your hundred thousand francs) in Roguin's caution-money. In that case, I will answer for your lawsuit, so far as it is possible to answer for any action at law, for no action is a foregone conclusion."

The opinion of so learned an expert put a little heart into Birotteau. He begged Derville to obtain a judgment within a fortnight. The advocate answered to the effect that Birotteau might be obliged to wait three months before the contract would be annulled.

"Three months!" cried Birotteau, who thought that he had found an expedient for raising money at once.

"Well, if you yourself succeed in gaining a prompt hearing for your case, we cannot hurry your opponent to suit your pace; he will take advantage of the delays of procedure; advocates are not always at the Palais; who knows but that the other party will let judgment go against him by default?

And he will appeal. You can't set your own pace, my dear sir!" said Derville, smiling.

"But at the Tribunal of Commerce——"

"Oh!" said the advocate, "the Consular Tribunal is one thing and the Tribunal of First Instance is another. You do things in a slashing way over yonder. Now, at the Palais de Justice there are formalities to be gone through. These formalities are the bulwarks of justice. How would you like it if a demand for forty thousand francs was suddenly fired off at you? Well, your opponent, who will see that amount compromised, will dispute it. Delays are the spiked wall of the law."

"You are right," said Birotteau, and he took leave of Derville with a deadly chill at his heart. "They are all right. Money! Money!" cried the perfumer, out in the street, talking to himself, as is the wont of busy men in this turbulent, seething Paris, which a modern poet calls "a vat."

As he came into his store, one of the assistants, who had been out delivering invoices to the customers, told him that, as the New Year was at hand, every one had torn off the receipt-form at the foot and kept the invoices.

"Then there is no money anywhere!" Birotteau exclaimed aloud in the store. All the assistants looked up at this, and he bit his lips.

In this way five days went by; and during those five days Braschon, Lourdois, Thorien, Grindot, Chaffaroux, and all the creditors whose bills remained unpaid, passed through the chameleon's intermediate transitions of tone, from the serene hues of confidence to the wrathful red of the commercial Bellona. In Paris, in such crises, suspicion is as quick to reach the panic stage as confidence is slow to show expansive symptoms; and, when a creditor once adopts the restringent system of doubts and precautions in business relations, he is apt to descend to underhand villainies that put him below his debtor's level. From cringing civility the creditors passed

successively through the inflammatory phase, the red of impatience, the lurid coruscations of importunity, to outbursts of disappointment, and from the cold-blue stage of making up their minds to the black insolence of threatening to serve a writ.

Braschon, the rich furniture dealer of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who had not been included in the invitations to the ball, sounded to arms in his quality of the creditor whose self-love has been wounded. Paid he meant to be, and within twenty-four hours; he required security, not deposits of furniture, but a second mortgage, the mortgage for forty thousand francs on the property in the Faubourg du Temple. In spite of their furious recriminations, these gentry still left César occasional intervals of peace when he might breathe; but instead of bringing a resolute will to carry these outworks of an awkward position, and so putting an end to them, Birotteau was taxing all his wits to keep the state of things from the knowledge of his wife, and the one person who could give him counsel knew nothing of his difficulties. He stood sentinel on the threshold of his store. He confided his momentary inconvenience to Célestin, who watched his employer with curious and astonished eyes; already César had fallen somewhat in his esteem, as men accustomed to prosperity are apt to dwindle when evil days discover that all their power consists in the increased facility of dealing with matters of every-day experience, acquired by an ordinary intelligence.

But if César lacked the mental energy required for defending himself when attacked at so many points at once, he had sufficient courage to face his position. Before the 15th of January he required the sum of sixty thousand francs, and thirty thousand of these were due on the 31st of December. Part of this sum was owing for the house, part for rent and accounts to be paid in ready money, part of it in bills to be met; with all his efforts he could only collect twenty

thousand francs, so that there was a deficit of ten thousand to be made up by the end of the month. Nothing seemed hopeless to him, for he had already ceased to look beyond the present moment, and, like an adventurer, had begun to live from day to day. At length he resolved to make what for him was a bold stroke. Before it was known that he was in difficulties, he would apply to François Keller, banker, orator, and philanthropist, widely known for his beneficence, and for his desire to stand well with the mercantile world of Paris, always with a view to representing their interests one day as a deputy in the Chamber. In politics the banker was a Liberal, and César was a Royalist; but the perfumer decided that the capitalist was a man after his own heart, and that a difference of opinion in politics was but one reason the more for opening an account. If paper should be necessary, he did not doubt Popinot's devotion, and counted upon obtaining from him some thirty bills of a thousand francs each; with these he might hold out until he gained his lawsuit, the forty thousand francs involved in it being offered as security to the most urgent creditors.

The effusive soul, who was wont to confide to the pillow of his dear Constance the least emotions of his existence, who drew his courage from her, and was wont to seek of her the light thrown by contradiction on all topics, was cut off from all exchange of ideas with his first assistant, his uncle, and his wife, and found that the weight of his cares was thereby doubled. Yet this self-sacrificing martyr preferred suffering alone to the alternative of casting his wife's soul into the fiery furnace; he would tell her about the danger when it was past. Perhaps, too, he shrank from telling her the hideous secret; he stood in some fear of his wife, and this fear lent him courage. He went every morning to low mass at Saint-Roch and told his troubles to God.

"If I do not meet a soldier on my way back from Saint-Roch, I will take it as a sign that my prayer is heard. It

shall be God's answer to me," he said to himself, after he had prayed for deliverance.

And, for his happiness, he did not meet a soldier. Yet, nevertheless, his heart was overfull, and he needed another human heart to whom he could make moan. Césarine, to whom he had already told the fatal news, learned the whole truth, and stolen glances were exchanged between them, glances fraught with despair or repressed hope, passionate invocations, appeals, and sympathetic responses, answering gleams of intelligence between soul and soul. For his wife César put on high spirits and mirth. If Constance asked any question—"Pshaw, everything was all right. Popinot" (to whom César gave not a thought) "was doing well! The Oil was selling! Claparon's bills would be met; there was nothing to fear." The hollow merriment was ghastly. When his wife lay sleeping amid the splendors, Birotteau would rise and fall to thinking over his misfortunes; and more than once Césarine came in, in her night-dress, barefooted, with a shawl about her white shoulders.

"Papa, you are crying; I can hear you," she would say, and she would cry herself as she spoke.

When César had written to ask the great François Keller to make an appointment with him he fell into such a state of torpor that Césarine persuaded him to walk out with her. In the streets of Paris he saw nothing but huge red placards, and the words CEPHALIC OIL in staring letters everywhere met his eyes.

While the glory of the Queen of Roses was thus waning in disastrous gloom, the firm of A. Popinot was dawning radiant with the sunrise splendors of success. Anselme had taken counsel of Gaudissart and Finot, and had launched his oil boldly. During the past three days two thousand placards had been posted in the most conspicuous situations in Paris. Every one in the streets was confronted with the Cephalic Oil, and willy-nilly must read the pithy remarks from Finot's pen

as to the impossibility of stimulating the growth of the hair, and the perils attendant on dyeing it, together with an extract from a paper read before the Académie des Sciences by Vauquelin. It was as good as a certificate of existence for dead hair, thus held out to those who should use the Cephalic Oil. The store-doors of every perfumer, hair-dresser, and wigmaker in Paris were made glorious with gilded frames, containing a beautiful design, printed on vellum paper, with a reduced fac-simile of the picture of "Hero and Leander" at the top, and beneath it ran the motto: *The ancient peoples of antiquity preserved their hair by the use of* CEPHALIC OIL.

"He has thought of permanent frames; he has found an advertisement that will last for ever!" said Birotteau to himself, as he stood staring in dull amazement at the store-front of the Silver Bell.

"Then you did not see a frame on your own door?" asked his daughter. "Monsieur Anselme brought it himself, and left three hundred bottles of the oil with Célestin."

"No, I did not see it," he answered.

"And Célestin has already sold fifty to chance-comers and sixty to our own customers."

"Oh!" said César.

The sound of myriad bells that misery sets ringing in the ears of her victims had made the perfumer dizzy; his head seemed to spin round and round in those days. Popinot had waited a whole hour to speak with him on the day before, and had gone away after chatting with Constance and Césarine; the women told him that César was very busy over his great scheme.

"Oh yes, the building land!" Popinot had said.

Luckily, Popinot had not left the Rue des Cinq-Diamants for a month; he had worked day and night at his business, and had seen neither Ragon, nor Pillerault, nor his uncle. The poor lad was never in bed before two o'clock in the morning; he had only two assistants, and at the rate at which

things were going he would soon have work enough for four. Opportunity is everything in business; success is a horse which, if caught by the mane and ridden by a bold rider, will carry him on to fortune. Popinot told himself that he should receive a welcome when, at the end of six months, he could carry the news to his aunt and uncle—"I am saved; my fortune is made!"—a welcome, too, from Birotteau when, at the end of the first half-year, he should bring him his share of the profits—thirty or forty thousand francs! He had not heard of Roguin's disappearance, nor of César's consequent disasters and difficulties; so that he could not let fall any indiscreet remarks in Madame Birotteau's presence.

Popinot had promised Finot five hundred francs for each of the leading newspapers (ten in all), and three hundred francs for each second-rate paper (and of these, too, there were ten), if the Cephalic Oil was mentioned three times a month in each. Of those eight thousand francs, Finot beheld three thousand as his own, his first stake to lay on the vast green table of speculation. So he had sprung like a lion upon his friends and acquaintances; he haunted newspaper offices; writers of newspaper articles awoke from slumber to find him sitting by their pillows; and the evening found him pacing the lobbies of all the theatres. "Remember my oil, my dear fellow; it is nothing to me; a matter of good-fellowship, you know; Gaudissart, a jolly dog." With this formula, his harangues always began and ended. He filled up spaces at the foot of the last columns in the papers, and left the money to those upon the staff. He was as cunning as any super who is minded to transform himself into an actor, and as active as an errand boy on sixty francs a month; he wrote insinuating letters, he worked on the vanity of all and sundry, he did dirty work for editors, to the end that his paragraphs might be inserted in their papers. His enthusiastic energy left no means untried—money, dinners, plati-

tudes. By means of tickets for the play he corrupted the men who finish off the columns toward midnight with short paragraphs of small news items already set up; hanging about the printing-office for that purpose, as if he had proofs to revise.

So by dint of making every one his friend, Finot secured the triumph of the Cephalic Oil over the *Pâte de Regnault* and the *Mixture Brésilienne*, over all the inventions, in fact, whose promoters had the wit to comprehend the influence of journalism and the effect produced upon the public mind by the piston-stroke of the reiterated paragraph. In that age of innocence, journalists, like draught-oxen, were unaware of their strength; their heads ran on actresses—Mesdemoiselles Florine, Tullia, Mariette—they lorded it over all creation, and made no practical use of their powers. In Andoche's propositions there was no actress to be applauded, no drama to be put upon the stage; he did not ask them to make a success of his vaudevilles, nor to pay him for his paragraphs; on the contrary, he offered money in season and opportune breakfasts; so there was not a newspaper that did not mention the Cephalic Oil, and how that it was in accordance with Vauquelin's investigations; not a journal that did not scoff at the superstition that the hair could be induced to grow and proclaim the danger of dyeing it.

These paragraphs rejoiced Gaudissart's heart. He laid in a supply of papers wherewith to demolish prejudice in the provinces, and accomplished the manœuvre known among speculators since his time as "taking the public by storm." In those days newspapers from Paris exercised a great influence in the departments, the hapless country districts being still "without organs." The Paris newspaper, therefore, was taken up as a serious study, and read through from the heading to the printer's name on the last line of the last page, where the irony of persecuted opinion might be supposed to lurk.

Gaudissart, thus supported by the press, had a brilliant success from the very first in every town where his tongue had play. Every provincial storekeeper was anxious for a frame and copies of "Hero and Leander." Finot devised that charming joke against Macassar Oil, which drew such laughter at the Funambules, when Pierrot takes up an old house-brush, visibly worn down to the holes, and rubs it with Macassar Oil, and, lo, the stump becomes a mop—a piece of irony which brought down the house. In later days Finot would gaily relate how that but for those three thousand francs he must have died of want and misery. For him three thousand francs was a fortune. In this campaign he discovered the power of advertising, which he was to wield so wisely and so much to his own profit. Three months later this pioneer was the editor of a small paper, of which after a time he became the proprietor, and so laid the foundation of his fortune. Even as the illustrious Gaudissart, that Murat among commercial travelers, "took the public by storm," and gained brilliant victories along the frontiers and in the provinces for the house of Popinot, so did the cause gain ground in public opinion in Paris, thanks to the desperate assault upon the newspapers, which gave it the prompt publicity likewise secured by the *Mixture Brésilienne* and the *Pâte de Regnault.* Three fortunes were made by this means, and then began the descent of the thousands of ambitious tradesmen who have since gone down by battalions into the arena of journalism, and there called advertising into being. A mighty revolution was wrought.

At that moment the words "Popinot & Company" were flaunting on every wall and store-door; and Birotteau, unable to measure the enormous area over which these announcements were displayed, contented himself with saying to Césarine, "Little Popinot is following in my footsteps," without comprehending the difference of the times, without appreciation of the new methods and improved means of communication

which spread intelligence much more rapidly than heretofore.

Birotteau had not set foot in his factory since the ball; he did not know how busy and energetic Popinot had been. Anselme had set all Birotteau's operatives on the work, and slept in the place. He saw Césarine sitting on every packing-case and reclining on every package; her face looked at him from each new invoice. "She will be my wife!" he said to himself, as, with coat thrown off and shirt-sleeves rolled above the elbows, he hammered in the nails with all his might, while his assistants were sent out on business.

The next day, after spending the whole night in pondering what to say and what not to say to the great banker, César reached the Rue du Houssaye and entered, with a heart that beat painfully fast, the mansion of the Liberal financier, the adherent of a political party accused, and not unjustly, of desiring the downfall of the Bourbons. To Birotteau, as to most small merchants in Paris, the manners and customs and the personality of those who move in high financial circles were quite unknown; for the smaller traders usually deal with lesser houses, which form a sort of intermediate term, a highly satisfactory arrangement for the great capitalists, who find in them one guarantee the more.

Constance and Birotteau, who had never overdrawn their balance, who had never known what it was to have no money in the safe and no bills in the portfolio, had not had recourse to these banks of the second order; and, for the best reasons, were entirely unknown in the higher financial world. Perhaps it is a mistaken policy seduously to abstain from borrowing even though you may not require the money; opinions differ on this head; but be that as it may, Birotteau at that moment deeply regretted that he had never put his signature to a piece of paper. Yet, as he was known as a deputy-mayor and a shrewd man of business, he imagined that he would only have to mention his name, and he should see the banker

at once; he did not know that men flocked to the Kellers' audiences as to the court of a king. In the antechamber of the study occupied by the man with so many claims to greatness, Birotteau found himself among a crowd composed of deputies, writers, journalists, stockbrokers, great merchants, men of business, engineers, and, above all, of familiars, who made their way through the groups of speakers and knocked in a particular manner at the door of the study, where they had the privilege of entry.

"What am I in the middle of this machinery?" Birotteau asked himself, quite bewildered by the stir and bustle in this factory, where so much brain-power was at work furnishing daily bread for the camp of the Opposition; this theatre where rehearsals of the grand tragi-comedy played by the Left were wont to take place.

On one hand he heard a discussion relative to a loan that was being negotiated to complete the construction of the principal lines of canal recommended by the Department of Roads and Bridges; a question of millions! On the other, journalists, the bankers' jackals, were talking of yesterday's sitting and of their patron's extempore speech. During the two hours while he waited, he saw the banker-politician thrice emerge from his cabinet, accompanying some visitor of importance for a few paces through the antechamber. Keller went as far as the door with the last—General Foy.

"It is all over with me!" Birotteau said to himself, and something clutched at his heart.

As the great banker returned to his cabinet, the whole troop of courtiers, friends, and followers crowded after him, like the canine race about some attractive female of the species. One or two bolder curs slipped in spite of him into the audience chamber. The conferences lasted for five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Some went away visibly chopfallen; some with a satisfied look; some assumed important airs. Time went by, and Birotteau looked anxiously at the

clock. No one paid the slightest attention to the man with a secret care, sighing restlessly in the gilded chair by the hearth, at the very door of the closet that contained that panacea for all troubles—credit.

Dolefully César thought how that he, too, in his own house, and for a little while, had been a king, as this man was, morning after morning; and he fathomed the depths of the abyss into which he was falling. He had bitter thoughts! How many unshed tears were crowded in those two hours! How many petitions he put up that this man might incline a favorable ear; for, beneath the husk of popularity-seeking good-nature, Birotteau instinctively felt that there lurked in Keller an insolent, tyrannous, and violent temper, a brutal craving to domineer, which alarmed his meek nature. At length, when but ten or a dozen people were left, Birotteau determined to start up when the outer door of the audience chamber creaked on its hinges, and to put himself on a level with the great public speaker with the remark, "I am Birotteau!" The first grenadier who flung himself into the redoubt at Borodino did not display more courage than the perfumer when he made up his mind to carry out this manœuvre.

"After all," said he to himself, "I am his deputy-mayor," and he rose to give his name.

François Keller's countenance took on an amiable expression; clearly he meant to be civil; he glanced at Birotteau's red ribbon, turned, opened the door of his cabinet, and indicated the way; but stayed behind himself for a while to speak with two new-comers who sprang up the staircase with tempestuous speed.

"Decazes would like to speak with you," said one of these two.

"It is a question of making an end of the Pavillon Marsan! The King sees clearly. He is coming over to us!" cried the other.

"We will all go to the Chambers," returned the banker,

and he entered his cabinet with the air of the frog that would fain be an ox.

"How can he think of his own affairs?" thought César, overwhelmed.

The radiance of the sun of superiority dazzled the perfumer, as the light blinds those insects which can only exist in the shade or in the dusk of a summer night.

Birotteau saw a copy of the Budget lying on a vast table, among piles of pamphlets and volumes of the "Moniteur," which lay open, displaying marked passages, past utterances of a minister, which were shortly to be hurled at his head; he was to be made to eat his words amid the plaudits of a crowd of dunces, incapable of comprehending that events modify everything. On another table stood a collection of boxes full of papers, a heap of memorials and projects, the thousand and one reports confided to a man in whose exchequer every nascent industry endeavors to dip.

The regal splendor of the cabinet, filled with pictures and statues and works of art; the litter on the mantel; the accumulations of documents relating to business concerns at home and abroad, heaped up like bales of goods—all these things impressed Birotteau; he dwindled in his own eyes, his nervousness increased, the blood ran cold in his veins.

On François Keller's desk there lay some bundles of bills, letters of exchange, and circular-letters. To these the great man addressed himself; and, as he swiftly put his signature to those that required no examination, "To what do I owe the honor of your visit, sir?" asked he.

At these words addressed to him alone, by the voice that spoke to all Europe, while the restless hand never ceased to traverse the paper, the poor perfumer felt as if a red-hot iron had been thrust through his vitals. His face forthwith assumed that ingratiating expression with which the banker had grown familiar during ten years of experience; the expression always meant that the wearers desired to involve the

"TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOR OF YOUR VISIT, SIR?"



house of Keller in some affair of great importance to the would-be borrowers and to no one else, an expression which shuts the banker's doors upon them at once. So François Keller shot a glance at César, a Napoleonic glance, which seemed to go through the perfumer's head. This imitation of their Emperor was a slight piece of affectation which certain parvenus permitted themselves, though the false coin was scarcely a passable copy of the true. For César, of the extreme Right in politics, the fanatical partisan of the Government, the factor in the monarchical election, that glance was like the stamp which a custom-house officer sets on a bale of goods.

"I do not want to take up your minutes unduly, sir; I will be brief. I have come on a simple matter of private business, to know if you will open a loan account with me. As an ex-judge of the Tribunal of Commerce and a man well-known at the Bank of France, you can understand that if I had bills to discount I should only have to apply to the bank where you are a governor. I have had the honor of being associated in my functions at the Tribunal with Monsieur le Baron Thibon, the head of the bill-discounting department, and he certainly would not refuse me. But, as I have never tried to borrow money nor accepted a bill, my signature is unknown, and you know how many difficulties lie in the way of negotiating a loan in such a case——"

Keller moved his head; and Birotteau, construing this as a sign of impatience, continued—

"The fact is, sir, that I have engaged in a speculation in land, outside my own line of business——"

François Keller, still signing and reading, and, to all appearance, paying no attention to César's remarks, turned at this, with a sign that he was following what was said. Birotteau took heart; his affair was in a promising way, he thought, he breathed more freely.

"Go on; I understand," said Keller good-humoredly.

"I am the purchaser of one-half of the building land near the Madeleine."

"Yes. I heard from Nucingen of the big affair that the firm of Claparon is negotiating."

"Well," the perfumer went on, "a loan of a hundred thousand francs, secured on my share of the land or on my business, would suffice to tide me over until I can touch the profits which must shortly accrue from a venture in my own way of business. If necessary, I would cover the amount by bills drawn on a new firm—Popinot & Company—a young house which——"

Keller seemed to be very little interested in this description of the firm of Popinot, and Birotteau gathered that he had somehow taken a wrong turn; he stopped; then, in dismay at the pause, he went on again—

"As for the interest, we——"

"Yes, yes," said the banker; "the thing may be arranged, and do not doubt my desire to meet you in the matter. Occupied as I am, I have all the finances of Europe on my hands, and the Chamber absorbs every moment of my time, so you will not be surprised to hear that I leave the investigation of a vast amount of regular business to my managers. Go downstairs and see my brother Adolphe; explain the nature of your guarantees to him; and, if he assents, return here with him to-morrow or the day after, at the time when I look into affairs of this kind, at five o'clock in the morning. We shall be proud and happy to receive your confidence; you are one of the consistent Royalists; and your esteem is the more flattering, since that politically we may find ourselves at enmity."

"Sir," said the perfumer, elated by this oratorical flourish, "I am as deserving of the honor you do me as of the signal mark of royal favor—— not unmerited by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the——"

"Yes," continued the banker, "the reputation which you

enjoy is a passport, Monsieur Birotteau. You are sure to propose nothing that is not feasible, and you can reckon upon our coöperation."

A door, which Birotteau had not noticed, was opened, and a woman entered; it was Mme. Keller, one of the two daughters of the Comte de Gondreville, a peer of France.

"I hope I shall see you, dear, before you go to the Chamber," said she.

"It is two o'clock," exclaimed the banker; "the battle has begun. Excuse me, sir, the question is one of upsetting a ministry——" he went as far as the door of the salon with the perfumer, and bade a man in livery: "Take this gentleman to Monsieur Adolphe."

Birotteau traversed a labyrinth of staircases on the way to a private office, less sumptuous than the cabinet of the head of the firm, but more business-like in appearance; he was borne along by an *if*, that easiest pacing mount that hope can furnish; he stroked his chin, and thought that the great man's compliments augured excellently well for his plans. It was regrettable that a man so amiable, so capable, so great an orator, should be inimical to the Bourbons.

Still full of these illusions, he entered M. Adolphe Keller's sanctum, a bare, chilly-looking room. Dingy curtains hung in the windows, the floor was covered with a much-worn carpet, and the furniture consisted of a couple of cylinder desks and one or two office chairs. This cabinet was to the first as the kitchen to the dining-room, as the factory to the store. Here matters of business were penetrated to the core, here enterprises were analyzed, and preliminary charges levied by the bank on all promising undertakings. Here originated all those bold strokes for which the Kellers were so well known in the highest commercial regions, when they would secure and rapidly exploit a monopoly in a few days. Here, too, omissions on the part of the legislature received careful attention, and unblushing demands were made for "sops in the

pan" (in the language of the Stock Exchange); that is to say, for money paid in consideration for small indefinable services, for standing godfather to an infant enterprise, and so accrediting it. Here were woven those tissues of fraud after a legal pattern, which consist in investing money as a sleeping-partner in some concern in temporary difficulties, with a view to slaughtering the affair as soon as it succeeds; the brothers would lie in wait, call in their capital at a critical moment—an ugly manœuvre that put the whole thing in their own hands and involved the hapless active partner in their covetous toils.

The two brothers adopted separate *rôles*. On high stood François, the politician, the man of brilliant parts; he bore himself like a king, he distributed favors and promises, he made himself agreeable to every one. Everything was easy when you spoke with him; he did business royally; he poured out the heady wine of fair words, which intoxicated inexperienced speculators and promoters of new schemes; he developed their own ideas for them. But Adolphe below absolved his brother on the score of political preoccupations, and cleverly raked in the winnings; he was the responsible brother, the one who was hard to persuade, so that there were two words to every bargain concluded with that treacherous house, and not seldom the gracious Yes of the sumptuous cabinet was transmuted into a dry No in Adolphe's office.

This manœuvre of delay gained time for reflection, and often served to amuse less skillful competitors.

Adolphe Keller was chatting with the famous Palma, the trusted counselor of the house, who withdrew as Birotteau came in. The perfumer explained his errand; and Adolphe, the more cunning of the two brothers, lynx-natured, keen-eyed, thin-lipped, hard-favored, listened to him with lowered head, watching the applicant over his spectacles, eying him the while with what must be called the banker's gaze, in which there is something of the vulture, something of the

attorney; a gaze at once covetous and cold, clear and inscrutable, sombre and ablaze with light.

"Will you be so good as to send me the documents relative to this Madeleine affair," said he, "since therein lies the guarantee of the account; they must be examined into before we begin to discuss the case on its merits. If the affair is satisfactory, we might possibly, to avoid encumbering you, be content to take part of the profits instead of discount."

"Come," said Birotteau to himself, as he went home again, "I see his drift. Like the hunted beaver, I must part with some of my skin. It is better to lose your fleece than to lose your life."

He went upstairs in high spirits, and his mirth had a genuine ring.

"I am saved," he told Césarine; "Keller will open a loan account with me."

But not until the 29th of December could Birotteau gain admittance a second time to Adolphe Keller's office. On the occasion of his first call, Adolphe was six leagues away from Paris, looking at some property which the great orator had a mind to buy. The next time both the Kellers were closeted together, and could see no one that morning; it was a question of a tender for a loan proposed by the Chambers, and they begged M. Birotteau to return on the following Friday. These delays were heartbreaking to the perfumer; but Friday came at last, and Birotteau sat by the fire in the office, with the daylight falling full on his face, and Adolphe Keller, sitting opposite, was saying, as he held up the notarial deeds, "These are all right, sir; but what proportion of the purchase-money have you paid?"

"A hundred and forty thousand francs."

"In money?"

"In bills."

"Have they been met?"

"They have not fallen due."

"But suppose that you have given more for the land than it is actually worth (taking it at its present value), where is our guarantee? We should have no security but the good opinion which you inspire and the esteem in which you are held. Business is not based on sentiment. If you had paid two hundred thousand francs, supposing that you have given too much by a hundred thousand francs to get possession of the land, we should in that case have at any rate a guarantee of a hundred thousand francs for the hundred thousand you want to borrow. The result for us would be that we should be owners of the land in your place, by paying your share; in that case we must know if it is a good piece of business. For if we are to wait five years to double our capital, it would better to put the money out to interest through the bank. So many things may happen. You want to draw an accommodation bill to meet your bills when they fall due? It is a risky thing to do! You go back to take a leap better. This is not in our way of business."

For Birotteau, it was as if the executioner had touched his shoulder with the branding-iron. He lost his head.

"Let us see," said Adolphe, "my brother takes a warm interest in you; he spoke of you to me. Let us look into your affairs," he added, and he glanced at the perfumer with the expression of a courtesan pressed for a quarter's rent.

Birotteau became a Molineux, and acted the part of the man at whom he had laughed so loftily. Kept in play by the banker, who took a pleasure in unwinding the skein of the poor man's thoughts, and showed himself as expert in the art of examining a merchant as the elder Popinot was skilled in unloosing a criminal's tongue, César told the story of his business career; he brought the Pâte des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion upon the scene; he gave a complete account of his dealings with Roguin, and, finally, of the lawsuit with regard to that mortgage from which he had reaped no benefit. He saw Keller's musing smile and jerk of the head from time

to time, and said to himself, "He is giving an ear to me! He is interested; I shall have my loan!" and Adolphe Keller was laughing at Birotteau, as Birotteau himself had laughed at Molineux. Carried away by the impulse of loquacity peculiar to those people on whom misfortune has an intoxicating effect, César showed himself as he really was; he helped the banker to take his measure when he suggested as his final expedient the Cephalic Oil and the firm of Popinot by way of a guarantee. Led away by a delusive hope, he allowed Adolphe Keller to fathom him and examine into his affairs, until Adolphe Keller saw in the man before him a Royalist blockhead on the brink of bankruptcy. Then, delighted at the prospect of this failure of the deputy-mayor of his arrondissement, of a man whose party was in power, who had been but lately decorated, Adolphe told Birotteau plainly that he could neither open a loan account with him nor speak on his behalf to the orator brother, the great François. If François were inclined to extend an imbecile generosity to a political adversary, and to come to the aid of a man who held opinions diametrically opposed to his own, he, Adolphe, had no mind that his brother should be a dupe; he would do all that in him lay to prevent his brother from holding out a helping hand to one of Napoleon's old antagonists, to a man who was wounded at Saint-Roch. Birotteau, exasperated at this, tried to say something about covetousness in the high-places of the financial world, of hard-heartedness and sham philanthropy; but he was overcome with such terrible distress that he could scarcely stammer out a few words about the institution of the Bank of France, to which the Kellers had recourse.

"But the Bank of France will never make an advance which a private bank declines," said Adolphe Keller.

"It has always seemed to me," said Birotteau, "that the bank was not fulfilling the purpose for which it was established, when the governors congratulate themselves on a balance-sheet in which they have only lost one or two hun-

dred thousand francs in transactions with the mercantile world of Paris; it is the province of the bank to watch over and foster trade."

Adolphe began to smile, and rose to his feet like a man who is bored.

"If the bank began to finance all the men in difficulties on 'Change, where rascality congregates in the slipperiest places of the financial world, the bank would file her schedule before a year was out. The bank is hard put to it as it is to guard against accommodation bills and fraudulent letters of exchange, and how would it be possible to examine into the affairs of every one who should be minded to apply for assistance?"

"I want ten thousand francs for to-morrow, Saturday the 30th; and where are they to come from?" Birotteau asked himself, as he crossed the court.

When the 31st is a holiday, payment is due on the 30th, according to custom. César's eyes were so full of tears that, as he reached the great gateway, he scarcely saw a handsome English horse, covered with foam, that pulled up sharply at the gate, and one of the neatest cabriolets to be seen in the streets of Paris. He would fain have been run over by the cabriolet; it would be an accidental death, and the confusion in his affairs would have been set down to the suddenness of the catastrophe. He did not recognize du Tillet's slender figure in faultless morning dress, or see him fling the reins to his servant and put a rug over the back of the thoroughbred.

"What brings *you* here?" asked du Tillet, addressing his old master.

Du Tillet knew quite well why Birotteau had come. The Kellers had made inquiries of Claparon, and Claparon, taking his cue from du Tillet, had blighted the perfumer's old-established business reputation. The tears in the unlucky merchant's eyes told the tale sufficiently plain, in spite of his sudden effort to keep them back.

"Perhaps you have been asking these Turks to oblige you in some way," said du Tillet, "cut-throats of commerce that they are, who have played many a mean trick; they will make a corner in indigo, for instance; they lower rice, forcing holders to sell cheap, so that they can get the game into their own hands and control the market; they are inhuman pirates, who know neither law, nor faith, nor conscience. You cannot know what things they are capable of doing. They will open a loan account with you if you have some promising bit of business; and, as soon as you have gone too far to draw back, they will pull you up and put pressure upon you till you make the whole affair over to them for next to nothing. Pretty stories they could tell you at Havre and Bordeaux and Marseilles about the Kellers! Politics are a cloak that covers a lot of dirty doings, I can tell you! So I make them useful without scruple. Let us take a turn or two, my dear Birotteau. Joseph, walk the horse up and down, he is overheated, and a thousand crowns is a big investment in horseflesh."

He turned toward the boulevard.

"Now, my dear master (for you used to be my master), is it money that you need? And they have asked you for security, the wretches! Well, for my own part, I know you; and I can offer to give you cash against your bills. I have made my money honorably and with unheard-of toil. I went in quest of fortune to Germany! At this time of day, I may tell you this—that I bought up the King's debts there for forty per cent. of their value; your guarantee was very useful to me then, and I am grateful. If you want ten thousand francs, they are at your service."

"What! du Tillet," cried César, "do you really mean it? Are you not making game of me? Yes, I am a little pressed for money, just for the moment——"

"I know; Roguin's affair," returned du Tillet. "Eh! yes. I myself have been let in there for ten thousand francs, which

the old rogue borrowed of me to run away with; but Madame Roguin will repay the money out of her claims on his estate. I advised her, poor thing, not to be so foolish as to give up her fortune to pay debts contracted for a mistress; it would be very well if she could pay them all, but how is she to make distinctions in favor of this or that creditor to the prejudice of others? You are no Roguin; I know you," continued du Tillet; "you would rather blow your brains out than cause me to lose a sou. Here we are in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin; come up and see me."

It pleased the young upstart to take his old employer, not through the offices, but by way of the private entry, and to walk deliberately, so as to give him a full view of a handsome and luxuriously furnished dining-room, adorned with pictures bought in Germany; through two drawing-rooms, more splendid and elegant than any rooms that Birotteau had yet seen save in the Duc de Lenoncourt's house. The good citizen was dazzled by the gilding, the works of art, the costly knick-knacks, precious vases, and countless little details. All the glories of Constance's rooms paled before this display; and knowing, as he did, the cost of his own extravagance—"Where can he have found all these millions?" said he to himself.

Then they entered a bedroom, which as much surpassed his wife's as the mansion of a great singer at the opera surpasses the third-floor dwelling of some supernumerary. The ceiling was covered with violet satin relieved with silken folds of white, and the white fur of an ermine rug beside the bed brought out in contrast all the violet tints of a carpet from the Levant. The furniture and the accessories were novel in form, and exhibited the very refinement of extravagance. Birotteau stopped in front of an exquisite timepiece, with a Cupid and Psyche upon it, a replica of one which had just been made for a celebrated banker. At length master and assistant reached a cabinet, the dainty sanctum of a fashionable dandy,

redolent rather of love than of finance. It was Mme. Roguin, doubtless, who, in her gratitude for the care and thought given to her fortune, had bestowed, by way of a thank-offering, the paper-cutter of wrought gold, the carved malachite paper-weights, and all the costly gewgaws of unbridled luxury. The carpet, one of the richest products of the Belgian loom, was as great a surprise to the eyes as its soft, thick pile to the tread. Du Tillet drew a chair to the fire for the poor dazzled and bewildered perfumer.

"Will you breakfast with me?" He rang the bell; it was answered by a servant, who was better dressed than the visitor.

"Ask Monsieur Legras to come up and then tell Joseph to return, you will find him at the door of Keller's bank; and you can go to Adolphe Keller's house and say that, instead of seeing him now, I shall wait till he goes on 'Change. Send up breakfast, and be quick about it."

This talk dazed the perfumer.

"So he, du Tillet, makes that formidable Adolphe Keller come to him at his whistle, as if he were a dog!"

A hop-o'-my-thumb of a page came in and spread a table so slender that it had escaped Birotteau's notice, setting thereon a Strasbourg pie, a bottle of Bordeaux wine, and various luxuries which did not appear on Birotteau's table twice in a quarter, on high-days and holidays. Du Tillet was enjoying himself. His feeling of hatred for the one man who had a right to despise him diffused itself like a warm glow through his veins, till the sight of Birotteau stirred in the depths of his nature the same sensations that the spectacle of a sheep struggling for its life against a tiger might give. A generous thought flashed across him; he asked himself whether he had not carried his vengeance far enough; he hesitated between the counsels of a newly awakened pity and those of a hate grown drowsy.

"Commercially speaking, I can annihilate the man," he thought; "I have power of life and death over him, over his

wife, who kept me on the rack, and his daughter, whose hand once seemed to me to grasp a whole fortune. I have his money as it is, so let us be content to let the poor simpleton swim to the end of his tether, which I shall hold."

But honest folk are wanting in tact; they do what seems good to them without calculating its effect on others, because they themselves are straightforward, and have no afterthoughts. So Birotteau filled up the measure of his own misfortune; he irritated the tiger; all unwittingly he sent a shaft home, and made an implacable enemy of him at a word, by his praise, by giving expression to his honest thoughts, by the sheer light-heartedness which is the gift of a blameless conscience. The cashier came in; and du Tillet said, looking toward César, "Monsieur Legras, bring me ten thousand francs in cash, and a bill for the amount payable to my order in ninety days by this gentleman, who is Monsieur Birotteau, as you know."

Du Tillet waited on his guest, and poured out a glass of Bordeaux wine for him; and Birotteau, who thought himself saved, laughed convulsively, fingered his watch-chain, and did not touch the food until his ex-assistant said, "You do not eat." In this way he laid bare the depths of the gulf into which du Tillet's hand had plunged him, while the hand which had drawn him out was still stretched over him, and might yet plunge him back again. When the cashier returned, and the bill had been accepted, and César felt the ten bank-notes in his pocket, he could no longer contain his joy. But a moment ago the news that he could not meet his engagements seemed about to be published abroad through his quarter, the bank must know it, he must confess that he was ruined to his wife; now everything was safe! The joy of his deliverance was as keen as the torture of impending bankruptcy had been. Tears filled the poor man's eyes in spite of himself.

"What can be the matter, my dear master?" asked du

Tillet. "Would you not do to-morrow for me what I am doing to-day for you? Isn't it as simple as saying good-day?"

"Du Tillet," said the worthy man, with solemn emphasis, as he rose and took his ex-assistant by the hand, "I restore you to your old place in my esteem."

"What! had I forfeited it?" asked du Tillet; and, for all his prosperity, he felt this rude home-thrust, and his color rose.

"Forfeited—— not exactly that," said Birotteau, thunderstruck by his folly; "people talked about you and Madame Roguin. The devil! another man's wife——"

"You are beating about the bush, old boy," thought du Tillet, in an old phrase learned in his earlier days.

And even as that thought crossed his mind, he returned to his old design. He would lay this virtue low, he would trample it under foot; all Paris should point the finger of scorn at the honest and honorable man who had caught him, du Tillet, with his hand in the till. Every hatred of every kind, political or private, between woman and woman, or between man and man, dates from some similar detection. There is no cause for hate in compromised interests, in a wound, nor even in a box on the ear; such injuries as these are not irreparable. But to be found out in some base piece of iniquity, to be caught in the act!—— The duel that ensues between the criminal and the discoverer of the crime cannot but be to the death.

"Oh! Madame Roguin," said du Tillet laughingly, "but isn't that rather a feather in a young man's cap? I understand you, my dear master, they must have told you that he lent me money. Well, on the contrary, it is I who have re-established her finances, which were curiously involved in her husband's affairs. My fortune has been honestly made, as I have just told you. I had nothing, as you know. Young men sometimes find themselves in terrible straits, and in dire

need one may strain a point; but if, like the Republic, one has made a forced loan now and again, why, one returns it afterward, and is as honest as France herself."

"Just so," said César. "My boy—God—Isn't it Voltaire who says—

"'He made of repentance the virtue of mortals?'"

"So long as one does not take his neighbor's money in a base and cowardly way," du Tillet continued, smarting once more under this application of verse; "as if you, for instance, were to fail before the three months are out, and it would be all up with my ten thousand francs——"

"I fail?" cried Birotteau (he had taken three glasses of wine, and happiness had gone to his head). "My opinions of bankruptcy are well known. A failure is commercial death. I should die."

"Long life to you!" said du Tillet.

"To your prosperity!" returned the perfumer. "Why do you not come to me for your perfumery?"

"Upon my word," said du Tillet, "I confess that I am afraid to meet Madame César, she always made an impression upon me; and if you were not my master, faith, I——"

"Oh! you are not the first who has thought her handsome, and wanted her, but she loves me! Well, du Tillet, my friend, do not do things by halves!"

"What?"

Birotteau explained the affair of the building land, and du Tillet opened his eyes, complimented César upon his acumen and foresight, and spoke highly of the prospects.

"Oh, well, I am much pleased to have your approbation; you are supposed to have one of the longest heads in the banking line, du Tillet! You can negotiate a loan from the Bank of France for me until the Cephalic Oil has made its way."

"I can send you to the firm of Nucingen," answered du Tillet, inwardly vowing that his victim should dance the whole

mazy round of bankruptcy. He sat down to his desk to write the following letter to the Baron de Nucingen:

"My dear Baron:—The bearer of this letter is M. César Birotteau, deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and one of the best known manufacturing perfumers in Paris. He desires to be put in communication with you; you need not hesitate to do anything that he asks of you, and by obliging him you oblige your friend,

"F. du Tillet."

Du Tillet put no dot over the *i* in his name. Among his business associates this clerical error was a sign which they all understood, and it was always made of set purpose; it annulled the heartiest recommendations, the warmest praise and instance in the body of the letter. On receiving such a note as this, where the very exclamation-marks breathed entreaty, in which du Tillet, figuratively speaking, went down on his knees, his associates knew that the writer had been unable to refuse the letter which was to be regarded as null and void. At sight of that undotted *i*, the receiver of the letter forthwith dismissed the applicant with empty compliments and vain promises. Not a few men of considerable reputation in the world are put off like children by this trick; for men of business, bankers, bill-discounters, and advocates have one and all two methods of signing their names; one is a dead letter, the other living. The shrewdest are deceived by it. You must have felt the double effect of a cold communication and a warm one to discover the stratagem.

"You are saving me, du Tillet," said César, as he read the present specimen.

"Oh dear me," said du Tillet, "just ask Nucingen for the money, and when he has read my letter he will let you have all that you want. Unluckily, my own capital is locked up at present, or I would not send you to the prince of bankers,

for the Kellers are dwarfs compared with Nucingen. He is a second Law. With my bill of exchange, you will be ready for the 15th, and after that we will see. Nucingen and I are the best friends in the world; he would not disoblige me for a million."

"It is as good as a guarantee," said Birotteau to himself, and as he went away his heart thrilled with gratitude for du Tillet. "Ah, well," he thought, "a good deed never loses its reward," and he fell incontinently to moralizing. Yet there was one bitter drop in his cup of happiness. He had, it is true, prevented his wife from looking into the ledgers for several days. Célestin must undertake the book-keeping in addition to his work, with some help from his master; he could have wished his wife and daughter to remain upstairs in possession of the beautiful rooms which he had arranged and furnished for them; but when the first little glow of enjoyment was over, Mme. César would have died sooner than renounce the personal supervision of the details of the business, "the handle of the frying-pan," to use her own Tourangeau expression.

Birotteau was at his wits' end; he had done everything that he could think of to conceal the symptoms of his embarrassment from her eyes. Constance had strongly disapproved of sending in the accounts; she had scolded the assistants, and asked Célestin if he meant to ruin the house, believing that the idea was Célestin's own. And Célestin meekly bore the blame by Birotteau's orders. In the assistant's opinion, Mme. César governed the perfumer; and, though it is possible to deceive the public, those of the household always know who is the real power in it. The confession was bound to come, and that soon, for du Tillet's loan would appear in the books, and must be accounted for.

As Birotteau came in at the door he saw, not without a shudder, that Constance was at her post, going through the amounts due to be paid, and doubtless balancing the books.

"How will you pay these to-morrow?" she asked in his ear, when he took his place beside her.

"With money," he replied, drawing the bank-notes from his pocket, with a sign to Célestin to take them.

"But where do those notes come from?"

"I will tell you the whole story to-night. Célestin, enter in the bill-book a bill for ten thousand francs due at the end of March, to order of du Tillet."

"Du Tillet!" echoed Constance, terror-stricken.

"I am just going to Popinot," said César. "It is too bad of me; I have not been round to see him yet. Is his oil selling?"

"The three hundred bottles which he brought are all sold out."

"Birotteau, do not go out again; I have something to say to you," said Constance. She caught her husband's arm, and drew him to her room in a hurry, which, under any other circumstances, would have been ludicrous. "Du Tillet!" she exclaimed, when the husband and wife were together, and she had made sure that there was no one but Césarine present; "Du Tillet robbed us of three thousand francs! And you are doing business with du Tillet! A monster who—who tried to seduce me," she said in his ear.

"A bit of boyish folly," said Birotteau, suddenly transformed into a freethinker.

"Listen to me, Birotteau; you are falling out of your old ways; you never go to the factory now. There is something, I can feel it. Tell me about it; I want to know everything."

"Well, then," said Birotteau, "we have nearly been ruined; we were ruined, in fact, this very morning, but everything is set straight again," and he told the dreadful story of the past two weeks.

"So that was the cause of your illness!" exclaimed Constance.

"Yes, mamma," cried Césarine. "Father has been very

brave, I am sure. If I were loved as he loves you, I would not wish more. He thought of nothing but your trouble."

"My dream has come true," said the poor wife, and pale, haggard, and terror-stricken, she sank down upon the sofa by the fireside. "I foresaw all this. I told you so that fatal night, in the old room which you have pulled down; we shall have nothing left but our eyes to cry over our losses. Poor Césarine, I——"

"Come, now; so that is what you say!" cried Birotteau. "I stand in need of courage, and you are damping it!"

"Forgive me, dear," said Constance, grasping César's hand in hers, with a tender pressure that went to the poor man's heart. "I was wrong; the misfortune has befallen us, I will be dumb, resigned, and strong to bear it. No, César, you shall never hear a complaint from me."

She sprang into César's arms, and said, while her tears fell fast, "Take courage, dear. I should have courage enough for two, if it were needed."

"There is the Oil, dear wife; the Oil will save us."

"May God protect us!" cried Constance.

"Will not Anselme come to father's assistance?" asked Césarine.

"I will go to him now," exclaimed César. His wife's heart-breaking tone had been too much for his feelings; it seemed that he did not know her yet, after nineteen years of married life. "Do not be afraid, Constance; there is no fear now. Here, read Monsieur du Tillet's letter to Monsieur de Nucingen; he is sure to lend us the money. Between then and now I shall have gained my lawsuit. Beside," he added (a lying hope to fit the circumstances), "there is your Uncle Pillerault. Courage is all that is wanted."

"If that were all?" said Constance, smiling.

Birotteau, with the great weight taken off his mind, walked like a man set free from prison; but within himself he felt the indefinable exhaustion consequent on mental exertion which

had made heavy demands upon his nervous system and required more than the daily allowance of will-power; he was conscious of the deficit when a man has drawn, as it were, on the capital of his vitality. Birotteau was growing old already.

Popinot's store in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants had undergone great changes in the last two months. It had been repainted. The rows of bottles ensconced in the pigeon-hole shelves, touched up with paint, rejoiced the eyes of every merchant who knows the signs of prosperity. The floor of the store was covered with packing-paper. The warehouse contained certain casks of oil, for which the devoted Gaudissart had procured an agency for Popinot. The books were kept upstairs in the counting-room. An old servant had been installed as housekeeper to Popinot and his three assistants.

Popinot himself, penned in a cash desk in the corner of the store screened off by a green partition, was usually arrayed in a green baize apron and a pair of green-cloth oversleeves, when he was not buried, as at this moment, in a pile of papers. The post had just come in, and Popinot, with a pen behind his ear, was taking in handfuls of business letters and orders, when at the words, "Well, my boy?" he raised his head, saw his late employer, locked his cash desk, and came forward joyously. The tip of the young man's nose was red, for there was no fire in the store and the street-door stood wide open.

"I began to fear that you were never coming to see me," he answered respectfully.

The assistants hurried in, eager to see the great man of the perfumery trade, their own master's partner, the deputy-mayor who wore the red ribbon. César was flattered by this mute homage, and he who had felt so small in the Kellers' bank must needs imitate the Kellers. He stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe once or twice with an air, and poured forth his commonplaces.

"Well, my dear fellow, are you always up early in the mornings?" asked he.

"No, we don't always go to bed," said Popinot; "one must succeed by hook or by crook."

"Well, what did I tell you? My Oil is a fortune."

"Yes, sir, but the method of selling it counts for something; I have given your diamond a worthy setting."

"As a matter of fact," said the perfumer, "how are we getting on? Have any profits been made?"

"At the end of a month!" cried Popinot. "Did you expect it? My friend Gaudissart has not been gone much more than three weeks. He took a post-chaise without telling me about it. Oh! he has thrown himself into this. We shall owe a good deal to my uncle! The newspapers will cost us twelve thousand francs," he added in Birotteau's ear.

"The newspapers!" cried the deputy-mayor.

"Have you not seen them?"

"No."

"Then you know nothing of this," said Popinot. "Twenty thousand francs in placards, frames, and prints! A hundred thousand bottles paid for! Oh! it is nothing but sacrifice at this moment. We are bringing out the Oil on a large scale. If you had stepped over to the Faubourg, where I have often been at work all night, you would have seen a little contrivance of mine for cracking the nuts, which is not to be sneezed at. For my own part, during the last five days I have made three thousand francs in commission on the druggists' oils."

"What a good head!" said Birotteau, laying his hand on little Popinot's hair, and stroking it as if the young man had been a little child, "I foresaw how it would be."

Several people came into the store.

"Good-by till Sunday; we are going to dine then with your aunt, Madame Ragon," said Birotteau, and he left Popinot to his own affairs. Evidently the roast which he had

scented was not yet ready to carve. "How extraordinary it is! An assistant becomes a merchant in twenty-four hours," he thought, and Birotteau was as much taken aback by Popinot's prosperity and self-possession as by du Tillet's luxurious rooms. "Here is Anselme drawing himself up a bit when I put my hand on his head, as if he were a François Keller already."

It did not occur to Birotteau that the assistants were looking on, and that the head of an establishment must preserve his dignity in his own house. Here, as in du Tillet's case, the good man had made a blunder in the kindness of his heart, and the real feeling expressed in that homely familiar way would have mortified any one but Anselme.

The Sunday dinner-party at the Ragons' house was destined to be the last festivity in the nineteen years of César's married life, the life which had been so completely happy. The Ragons lived on the third floor of a quaint and rather stately old house in the Rue du Petit-Bourbon-Saint-Sulpice. Over the paneled walls of their rooms danced eighteen-century shepherdesses in hooped petticoats, amid browsing eighteen-century sheep; and the old people themselves belonged to the bourgeoisie of that bygone century, with its solemn gravity, its quaint habits and customs, its respectful attitude to the noblesse, its loyal devotion to church and King.

The timepieces, the linen, the plates and dishes, all the furniture, in fact, had such an old-world air, that by very reason of its antiquity it seemed new. The sitting-room, hung with brocatelle damask curtains, contained a collection of "duchesse" chairs and whatnots; and from the wall a superb Popinot, Mme. Ragon's father, the alderman of Sancerre, painted by Latour, smiled down upon the room like a parvenu in all his glory. Mme. Ragon at home was incomplete without her tiny King Charles, who reposed with marvelous effect on her hard little *rococo* sofa, a piece of furniture which certainly had never played the part of Crébillon's sofa.

Among the Ragons' many virtues, the possession of old wines arrived at perfect maturity was by no means the least endearing; to say nothing of certain liqueurs of Mme. Anfoux's, brought from the West Indies by the lovely Mme. Ragon's admirers, sufficiently dogged to love on without hope (so it was said). Wherefore the Ragons' little dinners were highly appreciated. Jeannette, the old cook, served the two old folk with a blind devotion; for them she would have stolen fruit to make preserves; and, so far from investing her money in the savings bank, she prudently put it in the lottery, hoping one day to carry home the great prize to her master and mistress. In spite of her sixty years, Jeannette, on Sundays when they had company, superintended the dishes in the kitchen and waited at table with a deft quickness which would have given hints to Mlle. Contat as Suzanne in the "Marriage of Figaro."

This time the guests were ten in number—the elder Popinot, Uncle Pillerault, Anselme, César and his wife and daughter, the three Matifats, and the Abbé Loraux. Mme. Matifat, first introduced arrayed for the dance in her turban, now wore a gown of blue velvet, thick cotton stockings, kid slippers, green-fringed chamois-leather gloves, and a hat lined with pink and adorned with blossoming auriculas.

Every one had arrived by five o'clock. The Ragons used to beg their guests to be punctual; and when the good folk themselves were asked out to dinner, their friends were careful to dine at the same hour, for at the age of seventy the digestion does not take kindly to the new-fangled times and seasons ordained by fashionable society.

Césarine knew that Mme. Ragon would seat Anselme beside her; all women, even devotees, or the feeblest feminine intellects, understand each other in the matter of a love affair. The toilet of the perfumer's daughter was designed to turn young Popinot's head. Constance, who had given up, not without a pang, the idea of the notary, who for her was an

heir-presumptive to a throne, had helped Césarine to dress, certain bitter reflections mingling with her thoughts the while. Foreseeing the future, she lowered the modest gauze kerchief somewhat on Césarine's shoulders, so as to display rather more of their outline, as well as the throat on which the young girl's head was set with striking grace. The Grecian bodice, four or five folds crossing from left to right, gave short glimpses of delicately rounded contours beneath; and the leaden-gray merino gown, with its flounces trimmed with green ornaments, clearly defined a shape which had never seemed so slender and so lissome. Gold filigree earrings hung from her ears. Her hair, dressed high in Chinese style, was drawn back from her face, so that the delicate freshness of its surface and the dim tracery of the veins which suffused the white velvet with the purest glow of life were apparent at a glance. Indeed, Césarine was so coquettishly lovely that Mme. Matifat could not help saying so, without perceiving that the mother and daughter had felt the necessity of bewitching young Popinot.

Neither Birotteau, nor his wife, nor Mme. Matifat, nor any one else, broke in upon the delicious talk between the two young people; love glowed within them as they spoke with lowered voices in the draughty window-seat, where the cold made a miniature northeaster. Moreover, the conversation of their seniors grew animated when the elder Popinot let something drop concerning Roguin's flight, saying that this was the second notary-defaulter, and that hitherto such a thing had been unknown. Mme. Ragon had touched her brother's foot at the mention of Roguin, Pillerault had spoken aloud to cover the judge's remark, and both looked significantly from him to Mme. Birotteau.

"I know all," Constance said, and in her gentle voice there was a note of pain.

"Oh, well then," said Mme. Matifat, addressing herself to Birotteau, who humbly bent his head, "how much of your

money did he run away with? To listen to the gossip, you might be ruined."

"He had two hundred thousand francs of mine. As for the forty thousand which he pretended to borrow for me from one of his clients whose money he had squandered, we are going to law about it."

"You will see that settled this coming week," said the elder Popinot. "I thought that you would not mind my explaining your position to the president; he has ordered Roguin's papers to be brought into the Council Chamber; on examination it will be discovered when the lender's capital was embezzled, and Derville's allegations can be proved or disproved. Derville is pleading in person, to save expense to you."

"Shall we gain the day?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"I do not know," Popinot answered. "Although I belong to the Chamber before which the case will come, I shall refrain from deliberating upon it, even if I should be called upon to do so."

"But can there be any doubt about such a straightforward case?" asked Pillerault. "Ought not the deed to state that the money was actually paid down, and must not the notaries declare that they have seen it handed over? Roguin would go to the galleys if he fell into the hands of justice."

"In my opinion," the judge answered, "the lender should look to Roguin's caution-money and the amount paid for the practice for his remedy; but sometimes, in still simpler cases than this, the councilors at the Court-Royal have been divided six against six."

"What is this, mademoiselle; has Monsieur Roguin run away?" asked Anselme, overhearing at last what was being said. "Monsieur César said nothing about it to me—to me who would give my life for him——"

Césarine felt that the whole family was included in that "for him;" for if the girl's inexperience had not understood

the tone, she could not mistake the look that wrapped her in a rosy flame.

"I was sure of it; I told him so, but he hid it all from mother, and told his secret to no one but me."

"You spoke to him of me in this matter," said Anselme; "you read my heart, but do you read all that is there?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh! I am very happy," said Anselme. "If you will remove all my fears, in a year's time I shall be so rich that your father will not receive me so badly when I shall speak to him then of our marriage. Five hours of sleep shall be enough for me now of a night——"

"Do not make yourself ill," said Césarine, and no words can reproduce the tones of her voice as she gave Anselme a glance wherein all her thoughts might be read.

"Wife," said César, as they rose from table, "I think those young people are in love."

"Oh, well, so much the better," said Constance gravely; "my daughter will be the wife of a man who has a head on his shoulders and plenty of energy. Brains are the best endowment in a marriage."

She hurried away into Mme. Ragon's room. During dinner, César had let fall several remarks which had drawn a smile from Pillerault and the judge, so plainly did they exhibit the speaker's ignorance; and it was borne in upon the unfortunate woman how little fitted her husband was to struggle with misfortune. Constance's heart was heavy with unshed tears. Instinctively she mistrusted du Tillet, for all mothers understand *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* without learning Latin. She wept, and her daughter and Mme. Ragon, with their arms about her, could not learn the cause of her trouble.

"It is the nerves," she said.

The rest of the evening was spent over the card-table by the old people, and the younger ones played the blithe childish games styled "innocent amusements," because they cover

the innocent mischief of bourgeois lovers. The Matifats joined the young people.

"César," said Constance, as they went home again, "go to Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen some time about the 8th, so as to be sure some days beforehand that you can meet your engagements on the 15th. If there should be any hitch in your arrangements, would you raise a loan one day to pay your debts between one day and the next?"

"I will go, wife," César answered, and he grasped her hand and Césarine's in his as he added, "My darlings, I have given you bitter New Year's gifts!" And in the darkness inside the cab the two women, who could not see the poor perfumer, felt hot tears falling on their hands.

"Hope, dear," said Constance.

"Everything will go well, papa; Monsieur Popinot told me that he would give his life for you."

"For me—and for my family; that is it, is it not?" answered César, trying to speak gaily.

Césarine pressed her father's hand in a way which told him that Anselme was her betrothed.

Two hundred cards arrived for Birotteau on New Year's Day and the two following days. This influx of tokens of favor and of false friendship is a painful thing for people who are being swept away by the current of misfortune. Three times César presented himself at the Baron de Nucingen's hôtel, and each time in vain. The New Year's festivities sufficiently excused the banker's absence. But on the last visit Birotteau went as far as the banker's private office and learned from a German, the head clerk, that M. de Nucingen had only returned from a ball given by the Kellers at five o'clock that morning, and that he would not be visible until half-past nine. Birotteau chatted with this man for nearly half an hour, and contrived to interest the German in his affairs. So, during the day, this cabinet minister of the house of Nucingen wrote to tell César that the Baron would

see him at twelve o'clock the following morning, January the third. Although every hour brought its drop of bitterness, that day went by with dreadful swiftness. The perfumer took a cab and drove to the hôtel ; the courtyard was already blocked with carriages, and the poor honest man's heart was oppressed by the splendors of that celebrated house.

"Yet he has failed twice," he said to himself, as he went up the handsome staircase, with flowers on either side, and through the luxuriously furnished rooms by which the Baroness, Delphine de Nucingen, had made a name for herself. The Baroness strove to rival the most splendid houses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—the houses of a circle into which as yet she had no right of entry.

The Baron and his wife were at breakfast. In spite of the number of those who were waiting in his offices for him, he said that he would see du Tillet's friends at any hour. Birotteau trembled with hope at the change which the Baron's message produced on the contemptuous lackey's insolent face.

"Bardon me, my tear," said the Baron, addressing his wife, as he rose to his feet and bowed slightly to Birotteau, "dees shentleman ees ein goot Royaleest and de indimate frient of du Tillet. Meinnesir Pirôdôt is teputy-mayor of de second arrontussement, and gifs palls of Asiatic magnificence ; you vill make, no doubt, his agquaintance mit bleasure."

"I should be delighted to take lessons of Madame Birotteau, for Ferdinand——" ("Come," thought the perfumer, "she calls him Ferdinand, plump and plain.") "Ferdinand spoke of the ball to us with an admiration which says the more, because Ferdinand is very critical ; everything must have been perfect. Shall you soon give another ?" asked Mme. de Nucingen, with a most amiable expression.

"Madame, poor folk like us seldom amuse ourselves," answered the perfumer, doubtful whether the Baroness was

laughing at him, or if her words were simply an empty compliment.

"Meinnesir Crintod suberindended de alderations in your house," said the Baron.

"Oh! Grindot! is he that nice young architect who has just come back from Rome?" asked Delphine de Nucingen. "I am quite wild about him; he is making lovely sketches for my album."

No conspirator in the hands of the executioner in the torture chamber of the Venetian Republic could have felt less at his ease in the boots* than Birotteau in his ordinary clothes at that moment. Every word had for him an ironical sound.

"Ve too gif liddle palls here," the Baron continued, giving the visitor a searching glance. "Eferypody does it, you see!"

"Will Monsieur Birotteau join us at breakfast?" asked Delphine, and indicated the luxuriously furnished table.

"I am here on business, Madame la Baronne, and——"

"Yes!" said the Baron. "Matame, vill you bermit us to talk pizness?"

Delphine made a little gesture of assent. "Are you about to buy some perfumery?" she asked of the Baron, who shrugged his shoulders, and turned in despair to César.

"Du Dillet take de greatest inderest in you," said he.

"At last we are coming to the point," thought the hapless merchant.

"Mit his ledder, your gretid mit my house is only limited py de pounds of my own fortune."

The life-giving draught which the angel bore to Hagar in the wilderness must surely have been like the dew which these outlandish words effused through Birotteau's veins. The cunning Baron clung of set purpose to the horrible accent of the German Jew, who flatters himself that he has mastered an

* An instrument of torture in which the legs were crushed.

alien tongue; for this system led to misapprehensions highly useful to him in the way of business.

"And you shall have ein gurrent aggount, dat is how we vill do it," remarked the good, the great, and venerable financier, with Alsatian geniality.

Birotteau's doubts were all laid to rest; he had had experience of business, and he knew that a man never goes into details unless he is disposed to oblige you and to carry out a plan.

"I neet not say to you that the pank demands dree zignatures off eferypody, gif de amount is large or small. So you shall make all your pills to de order off our friend du Dillet, who vill send dem de same day to de pank mit my zignature, and py four o'glock you shall have de amount of de pills dat you haf accept in de morning, and at pank rate. I do not vant gommission nor discount—nor nossing; for I shall haf de bleasure of peing agreeable to you—— But I make one gondition!" he added, touching his nose with the forefinger of his left hand and putting an indescribable cunning into the gesture.

"It is granted before you ask it, Monsieur le Baron," said Birotteau, imagining that the banker meant to stipulate for a share in the profits.

"Ein gondition to vich I addach de greatest price, because I should like Montame de Nichinguenne to take, as she has said, some lessons of Montame Pirôdôt."

"Monsieur le Baron, do not laugh at me, I beg."

"Meinnesir Pirôdôt," said the financier seriously, "it is an agreement; you are to infite us to your next pall. My wife is chealous; she would like to see your house, of vich eferypody says such great dings."

"Monsieur le Baron!"

"Oh! if you refuse me, no loan aggount! You are in great favor. Yes! I know dat de brefect of de Seine was go to you."

"Monsieur le Baron!"

"You had La Pillartière, ein shentleman-in-ordinary to de King; and de goot Fentéheine, for you were wounded—at Sainte——"

"On the 13th of Vendémiaire, Monsieur le Baron."

"You had Meinnesir de Lassebette, Meinnesir Fauqueleine of de Agademie——"

"Monsieur le Baron!"

"Eh! *der teufel,* do not be so modest, Meester Teputy-Mayor; I haf heard dat de King said dat your pall——"

"The King?" asked Birotteau, destined to learn no more, for at this moment a young man came into the room; the sound of his footsteps, heard at a distance, had brought a bright color into Delphine de Nucingen's fair and beautiful face.

"Goot-tay, my tear de Marsay," said the Baron. "Take my blace; dere are a lot of beoples in my office, dey say. Who knows why? De mines off Wortschinne are baying two hunderd ber cent.! Yes. I have receifed de aggounts. You haf a hunderd tousand francs more of ingom dis year, Montame de Nichinguenne; you could buy girdles and kew-kaws to make yourself pretty, as if you neeted dem!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Birotteau. "The Ragons have sold their shares!"

"Who may these gentlemen be?" asked the young dandy with a smile.

"Dere!" said Nucingen, who had gone as far as the door already, "it looks to me as if dose bersons—— Te Marsay, dis is Meinnesir Pirôdôt, your berfumer, who gifs palls mit Asiatic magnificence, and has been degoraded py de King and——"

De Marsay, taking up his eyeglass, remarked, "Ah! to be sure. I thought that the face was familiar. Then are you about to perfume your affairs with some efficacious oil, to make them run smoothly?"

"Ach! vell, dose Rakkons had an aggount mit me," the

Baron went on. "I put dem in de vay of ein fortune, and dey could not vait one more day for it."

"Monsieur le Baron!" cried Birotteau.

The worthy perfumer found himself very much in the dark about his affairs, and fled after the banker without taking leave of the Baroness or of de Marsay. M. de Nucingen was on the lowest step of the stairs, but even as he reached the door of his office, Birotteau was beside him. As he turned the handle he saw the despairing gesture of the poor creature, for whom the gulf was yawning, and said—

"Eh! it is understood, is it not? See du Dillet, and arranche it all mit him."

It occurred to Birotteau that de Marsay might have some influence with the Baron; he darted upstairs with the speed of a swallow, and slipped into the dining-room where, by rights, the Baroness and de Marsay should have been, for he had left Delphine waiting for her coffee and cream. The coffee indeed was now waiting, but the Baroness and the young dandy had vanished; the servant looked amused at Birotteau's astonishment, and there was nothing for it but to go more leisurely downstairs again. From the Nucingens' hôtel he went at once to du Tillet, only to hear that he was at Mme. Roguin's house in the country. He took a cab, and paid an extra fare to be driven to Nogent-sur-Marne as quickly as if he had traveled post. But at Nogent-sur-Marne the porter told him that *Monsieur and Madame* had set out for Paris, and Birotteau returned quite tired out.

When he told his wife and daughter the story of his excursion, he was amazed to receive the sweetest consolation and assurances that all would go well from Constance, who had always taken all the little ups and downs of business as occasions on which to utter her boding cries.

At seven o'clock the next morning, Birotteau took up his position before du Tillet's door in the dim light. He begged the porter to put him into communication with du Tillet's

man, and, by dint of slipping ten francs into the porter's hands, obtained the favor of an interview with du Tillet's man; of him he asked to give him an interview with du Tillet as soon as du Tillet should be visible, and to that end a couple of gold-pieces found their way into the possession of du Tillet's men. By way of these little sacrifices and great humiliations, common to courtiers and petitioners, he attained his end. At half-past eight, when his ex-assistant had slipped on a dressing-gown and shaken off the confused ideas of a man awakened from sleep, had yawned, stretched himself, and asked pardon of his old master, Birotteau found himself face to face with the tiger thirsting for revenge, the man whom he was fain to consider as his one friend in the world.

"Do not mind me," said Birotteau, replying to the apology.

"What do you want, *my good César?*" asked du Tillet; and César, not without terrible palpitations, gave the Baron de Nucingen's answer and demands to an inattentive listener, who looked about for the bellows, and scolded his manservant for taking so long over lighting the fire.

César did not notice at first that, if the master was not heedful, the man was interested; but seeing this at last he grew confused and broke off, to begin again, spurred on by a "Go on, go on; I am listening," from the abstracted banker.

The good man's shirt was soaked with perspiration, which turned icy cold when du Tillet looked full and steadily at him, and he could see those eyes of silver streaked with a few gold threads; there was a diabolical light in them which pierced him to the heart.

"My dear master, the bank refused your paper, passed on to Gigonnet *without guarantee* by the firm of Claparon; is that my fault? What! you have been a judge at the Consular Tribunal, how could you make such blunders? I am, before all things, a banker. I will give you my money, but I could not expose my signature to a refusal from the bank. I live by credit. So do we all. Do you want money?"

"Can you let me have all that I need in cash?"

"That depends upon the amount to be paid. How much do you want?"

"Thirty thousand francs."

"Plenty of chimney-pots tumbling about my ears!" exclaimed du Tillet, and he burst into a laugh.

The perfumer, misled by the splendor of du Tillet's surroundings, chose to regard that laugh as a sign that the sum was a mere trifle. He breathed again. Du Tillet rang the bell.

"Tell the cashier to come up."

"He is not here yet, sir," the servant answered.

"Those rogues are laughing at me! It is half-past eight; they ought to have done a million francs' worth of business by now."

Five minutes later M. Legras came upstairs.

"How much have we in the safe?"

"Only twenty thousand francs. Your orders were to buy thirty thousand livres per annum in *rentes*, at present price, payable on the 15th."

"That is right; I am still asleep."

The cashier gave Birotteau a sly glance, and went.

"If truth were banished from the earth she would leave her last word with a cashier," said du Tillet. "But have you not an interest in little Popinot's business, now that he has just set up for himself?" he added, after a horrible pause in which the sweat gathered in drops on Birotteau's forehead.

"Yes," said César innocently. "Do you think you could discount his signature for a fair amount?"

"Bring me fifty thousand francs' worth of his acceptances, and I will get them negotiated for you at a reasonable rate by one Gobseck; very easy to do business with when he has plenty of uncalled-for capital on his hands, and he has a good deal just now."

Birotteau went home again heartbroken. He did not see

that bankers and bill-discounters were sending him backward and forward in a game of battledore and shuttlecock; but Constance guessed even then that it would be impossible to obtain a loan of any sort. If three bankers had already refused credit to a man so well known as the deputy-mayor every one would hear of it, and the Bank of France was no longer to be thought of.

"Try to renew" (this was Constance's advice). "Go to your co-associate, Monsieur Claparon, to every one, in fact, whose bills fall due on the 15th, and ask them to renew. There will be time enough then to go to bill-discounters with Popinot's bills."

"To-morrow will be the 13th!" exclaimed Birotteau, worn out with anxiety.

He was "endowed with a sanguine temperament," to quote his own prospectus; a temperament upon which the wear and tear of emotion and of thought tell so enormously that sleep is imperatively needed to repair the waste. Césarine brought her father into the drawing-room, and played "Rousseau's Dream," that charming composition of Hérold's, while Constance sat sewing by her husband's side. The poor man lay back on the ottoman couch. Every time his eyes rested on his wife he saw a sweet smile on her lips, and so he fell asleep.

"Poor man!" said Constance. "What torture is in store for him! If only he can endure it!"

"Oh, mamma, what is it?" asked Césarine, seeing her mother in tears.

"I see bankruptcy ahead, darling. If your father is obliged to file his schedule there must be no asking for pity of any one. You must be prepared to be an ordinary store-girl, my dear. If I see you doing your part bravely, I shall have strength to begin life again. I know your father; he will not keep back one centime; I shall give up my claims, all that we have will be sold. Take your clothes and trinkets

to-morrow to Uncle Pillerault; you are not bound to lose anything, my child."

At these words, spoken with such devout sincerity, Césarine's terror knew no bounds. She thought of going to Anselme, but a feeling of delicacy withheld her.

The next morning found Birotteau in the Rue de Provence at nine o'clock. He had fallen a victim to fresh anxieties of a totally different kind. To borrow money is not necessarily a complicated process in business; it is a matter of daily occurrence, for capital must always be found wherever a new enterprise is started; but to ask a man to renew a bill is in commercial circles what the police court is to the court of assize; it is a first step to bankruptcy, even as a misdemeanor is half-way to a crime. The secret of your weakness and your embarrassment passes out of your own keeping. A merchant delivers himself up, bound hand and foot, to another merchant, and charity is not a virtue much practiced on the Stock Exchange.

The perfumer, who hitherto had walked the streets of Paris with bright confident eyes, now cast down by doubts, hesitated to go to Claparon; he was beginning to understand that with bankers the heart is merely a portion of the internal economy. Claparon had seemed to him so brutal in his coarse hilarity, and he had felt so much vulgarity in the man, that he shrank from approaching this creditor.

"He is nearer the people, perhaps he will have more soul!" This was the first word of accusation which the anguish of his position wrung from him.

César glanced up at the windows and at the green curtains yellowed by the sun; then he drew the last of his stock of courage up from the depths of his soul, and climbed the stairs that led to a shabby mezzanine floor. He read the word "Office," engraven in black letters on an oval brass-plate upon the door, and knocked. No one answered, so he went in.

The whole place was something more than humble; it sav-

ored of dire poverty, avarice, or neglect. No clerk showed his face behind the barrier of unpainted pine, surmounted at elbow-height by a brass-wire lattice, an arrangement which screened off an inner space occupied by tables and desks of blackened wood. Scattered about the deserted offices lay inkstands in which mold was growing, quill-pens touzled like a street urchin's head, twisted up into suns with rays; the rooms were littered with cardboard cases, papers, and circulars, useless no doubt. The floor of the lobby was as worn, as damp and gritty as the floor of a lodging-house parlor. Through a door on which the word "Counting-room" was inscribed, the visitor entered a second room, where everything was in keeping with the sinister waggery displayed in the first. In one corner stood a large cage of oak with a grill of copper-wire, and a cashier's sliding window. An enormous iron letter-box had doubtless been abandoned to the rats for a playground. The open door of this cage gave a view of yet another of these whimsical offices, and of a shabby and worm-eaten green chair, a mass of horsehair escaping through a hole underneath this piece of furniture in countless cork-screw curls that called its owner's wig in mind. Evidently this room had been the drawing-room of the house before it had been converted into offices, but the only attempt at ornamental furniture was a round table covered with a green cloth, and some old chairs covered with black leather and adorned with gilt nail-heads which stood about it. The mantel had some pretensions to elegance, the hearthstone was unblackened, and there were no visible signs that a fire had been lighted there. The pier-glass above it, tarnished with fly-spots, had a mean look; so had a mahogany clock-case bought at the sale of some departed notary's office furniture, a dreary object which enhanced the depressing effect of the pair of empty candlesticks and the all-pervading sticky grime. The dinginess of the paper on the walls, drab with a rose-colored border, spoke plainly of the habitual presence of smokers and

absence of ventilation. The whole stale-looking room resembled nothing so much as a newspaper editor's office. Birotteau, afraid of intruding on the banker's privacy, gave three sharp taps on the door opposite the one by which he had entered.

"Come in!" cried Claparon, and the sound of his voice evidently came from a room beyond. The perfumer could hear a good fire crackling on the hearth, but the banker was not there. This apartment did duty, as a matter of fact, for a private office. François Keller's elegantly furnished sanctum differed from the grotesque neglect of this sham capitalist's surroundings as widely as Versailles differs from the wigwam of a Huron chief; and Birotteau, who had beheld the glories of the banking world, was about to be introduced to its blackguardism.

In a sort of oblong den, contrived behind the private office, where the whole of the furniture, scarcely elegant in its prime, had been battered, broken, covered with grease, slit to rags, soiled and spoiled by the slovenly habits of the occupier, reclined Claparon, who, at sight of Birotteau, flung on a filthy dressing-gown, laid down his pipe, and drew the bed-curtains with a haste that seemed suspicious even to the innocent perfumer.

"Take a seat, sir," said du Tillet's banker puppet.

Claparon without his wig, his head tied up in a bandanna handkerchief all awry, was to Birotteau's thinking the more repulsive in that his loose dressing-gown gave glimpses of a nondescript knitted woolen garment, once white, but now a dingy brown, from indefinitely prolonged wear.

"Will you breakfast with me?" asked Claparon, bethinking himself of the ball, and prompted partly by a wish to turn the tables on his host, partly by anxiety to put Birotteau off the scent. And, in point of fact, a round table, hastily cleared of papers, was suspiciously suggestive; for it displayed a pâté, oysters, white wine, and a dish of vulgar kidneys, *sautés au vin*

de Champagne, cooling in their gravy, while an omelette with truffles was browning before the sea-coal fire. The table was set for two persons; two table-napkins, soiled at supper on the previous evening, would have enlightened the purest innocence. Claparon, in the character of a man who has a belief in his own adroitness, insisted in spite of Birotteau's polite refusals.

"I should by rights have had somebody to breakfast, but that somebody has not kept the appointment," cried the cunning commercial traveler, speaking loud, so that the words might reach the ears of an auditor hiding under the blankets.

"I have come on business pure and simple, sir," said Birotteau, "and I shall not detain you long."

"I am overwhelmed with business," returned Claparon, pointing to a cylinder-desk and to the tables, which were heaped up with papers; "not a poor little minute may I have to myself. I never see people except on Saturdays; but for you, my dear sir, I am always at home. I have no time left nowadays for love affairs or lounging about; I am losing the business instinct, which takes intervals of carefully timed idleness, if it is to keep its freshness. Nobody sees me busy doing nothing in the boulevards. Pshaw! business bores me, I don't care to hear any more about business at present; I have money enough, and I shall never have pleasure enough. My word, I have a mind to turn tourist and see Italy. Ah! beloved Italy! fair even amid her adversity, adorable land, where, doubtless, I shall find some magnificent, indolent Italian beauty; I have always admired Italian women! Have you ever had an Italian mistress? No? Oh, well, come to Italy with me. We will see Venice, the city of the Doges, fallen, more's the pity, into the hands of those Philistines the Austrians, who know nothing of art. Pooh! let us leave business, and canals, and loans, and governments in peace. I am a prince when my pockets are well lined. Let us travel, by Jove!"

"Just one word, sir, and I will go," said Birotteau. "You passed my bills on to Monsieur Bidault."

"Gigonnet, you mean; nice little fellow, Gigonnet; a man as easy-going as a—as a slip-knot."

"Yes," said César. "I should be glad—and in this matter I am relying on your integrity and honor"—(Claparon bowed)—"I should be glad if I could renew——"

"Impossible," said the banker roundly—"impossible. I am not the only man in the affair. We are all in council, 'tis a regular Chamber; but that we are all on good terms among ourselves, like rashers in a pan. Oh, we deliberate, that we do! The building land by the Madeleine is nothing; we are doing other things elsewhere. Eh! my good sir, if we were not busy in the Champs-Élysées, near the new Exchange which has just been finished, in the Quartier Saint-Lazare and about the Tivoli, we should not be *vinanciers*, as old Nucingen says. So what is the Madeleine? A little speck of a business. Prrr! we do not dabble, my good sir," he said, tapping Birotteau's chest, and giving him a hug. "There, come and have your breakfast, and we will have a talk," Claparon continued, by way of softening his refusal.

"By all means," said Birotteau. "So much the worse for the other," thought he. He would wait till the wine went to Claparon's head, and find out then who his partners really were in this affair, which began to have a very shady look.

"That is right! Victoire!" shouted the banker, and at the call appeared a genuine Leonarda, tricked out like a fishwife.

"Tell the clerks that I cannot see anybody, not even Nucingen, Keller, Gigonnet, and the rest of them!"

"There is no one here but Monsieur Lempereur."

"He can receive the fashionables," said Claparon, "and the small fry need not go beyond the public office. They can be told that I am meditating how to get a pull—at a bottle of champagne."

To make an old commercial traveler tipsy is to achieve the impossible. César had mistaken his boon companion's symptoms, and thought his boisterous vulgarity was due to intoxication, when he tried to shrive him.

"There is that rascal Roguin still in it with you," said Birotteau; "ought you not to write and tell him to help out a friend whom he has left in the lurch, a friend with whom he dined every Sunday, and whom he has known for twenty years?"

"Roguin? A fool; we have his share. Don't be downhearted, my good friend, it will be all right. Pay on the 15th, and that done, we shall see! I say, 'we shall see'—(a glass of wine!)—but the capital is no concern of mine whatever. Oh! if you should not pay at all, *I* should not give you black looks; my share in the affair is limited to a percentage on the purchase-money and something down on completion of the contract, in consideration of which I brought round the vendors. Do you understand? Your associates are good men, so I am not afraid, my dear sir. Business is so divided up nowadays. Every business requires the coöperation of so many specialists! Do you join the rest of us? Then do not dabble in combs and pomade-pots—a paltry way of doing business; fleece the public, and go in for the speculation."

"A speculation?" asked the perfumer; "what sort of business is it?"

"It is commerce in the abstract," replied Claparon, "an affair which will only come to light in ten years' time at the bidding of the great Nucingen, the Napoleon of finance, a scheme by which a man embraces sum-totals and skims the cream of profits yet to be made; a gigantic conception, a method of marking expectations like timber for annual felling; it is a new cabal, in short. There are but ten or twelve of us as yet, long-headed men, all initiated into the cabalistic secrets of these magnificent combinations."

César opened his eyes and ears, trying to comprehend these mixed metaphors.

"Listen to me," Claparon continued, after a pause; "such strokes as these need very capable men. Now, there is the man who has ideas but has not a penny, like all men with ideas. That sort of man spends and is spent, and cares for nothing. Imagine a pig roaming about a wood for truffles, and a knowing fellow on his tracks; that is the man with the money, who waits till he hears a grunt over a find. When the man with the ideas has hit upon a good notion, the man with the money taps him on the shoulder with a 'What is this? You are putting yourself in the furnace-mouth, my good friend; your back is not strong enough to carry this; here are a thousand francs for you, and let *me* put this affair in working order.' Good! Then the banker summons the manufacturers—'Set to work, my friends! Out with your prospectuses! Blarney to the death!' Out come the hunting-horns, and they pipe up with 'A hundred thousand francs for five sous!'—or five sous for a hundred thousand francs, gold-mines, coal-mines; all the flourishes and alarums of commerce, in short. Art and science are paid to give their opinion, the affair is paraded about, the public rushes into it and receives paper for its money, and our takings are in our hands. The pig is safe in his stye with his potatoes, and the rest of them are wallowing in bills of exchange. That is how it is done, my dear sir. Go in for speculation. What do you want to be? A pig or a gull, a clown or a millionaire? Think it over. I have summed up the modern theory of loans for you. Come to see me; you will find a good fellow, always jolly. French joviality, at once grave and gay, does no harm in business, quite the contrary! Men who can drink are made to understand each other. Come! another glass of champagne? It is choice wine, eh? It was sent me by a man at Épernay, for whom I have sold a good deal of it, and at good prices too (I used to be in the wine

trade). He shows his gratitude and remembers me in my prosperity. A rare trait."

Birotteau, bewildered by this flippancy and careless tone in a man whom everybody credited with such astonishing profundity and breadth, did not dare to question him any further. But, in spite of the confusion and excitement induced by unwonted potations of champagne, a name let fall by du Tillet came up in his mind, and he asked for the address of a bill-discounter named Gobseck.

"Is that what you are after, my dear sir?" asked Claparon. "Gobseck is a bill-discounter in the same sense that the hangman is a doctor. The first thing that he says to you is 'Fifty per cent.' He belongs to the school of Harpagon; he will supply you with canary birds and stuffed boa-constrictors, with furs in summer and nankeen in winter. And whose bills are you going to offer him? He will want you to deposit your wife, your daughter, your umbrella, and everything that is yours, down to your hat-box, your clogs (do you wear hinged clogs?), poker and tongs, and the firewood in your cellar, before he will take your bills with your bare name to them!—— Gobseck! Gobseck! In the name of misfortune, who sent you to the guillotine of commerce?"

"M. du Tillet."

"Oh! the rogue; just like him. We used to be friends once upon a time; and if the quarrel has gone so far that we do not speak to each other now, I have good reason for disliking him, believe me! He let me see to the bottom of his soul of mud, and he made me uncomfortable at that fine ball you gave. I cannot bear him, with the coxcomb's airs he gives himself, because he has the good graces of a *notaresse!* I could have marquises myself if I had a mind; he will never have my esteem, I know. Ah! my esteem is a princess who will never take up too much room on his pillow. I say though, old man, you are a funny one to give us a ball and then come and ask us to renew two months afterward! You

are likely to go far. Let us go into speculation together. You have a character; it would be useful to me. Oh! du Tillet was born to understand Gobseck. Du Tillet will come to a bad end in the Place de Grève. If, as they say, he is one of Gobseck's lambs, he will soon come to the length of his tether. Gobseck squats in a corner of his web like an old spider who has seen the world. Sooner or later, *zut!* and the money-lender sucks in his man like a glass of wine. So much the better! Du Tillet played me a trick—oh! a scurvy trick!"

After an hour and a half spent in listening to meaningless prate, Birotteau determined to go, for the commercial traveler was preparing to relate the adventure of a representative of the people at Marseilles, who had fallen in love with an actress who played the part of "La belle Arsène." The Royalist pit hissed the lady.

"Up he gets," said Claparon, "and stands bolt upright in his box. '*Arté qui l'a siblée?*' says he; '*eu!*—— *Si c'est oune femme, je l'amprise; si c'est oune homme, nous se verrons; si c'est ni l'un ni l'autte, que le troun di Diou le cure?*'—— How do you think the adventure ended?"

"Good-day, sir," said Birotteau.

"You will have to come and see me," said Claparon at this. "Cayron's first bill has come back protested, and I am the indorser; I have reimbursed the money, and I shall send it on to you, for business is business."

Birotteau felt this cold affectation of a readiness to oblige, as he had already felt Keller's hardness and Nucingen's Teutonic banter, in his very heart. The man's familiarity, his grotesque confidences made in the generous glow of champagne, had been like a blight to the perfumer; he felt as if he were leaving some evil haunt in the world financial.

He walked downstairs; he found himself in the street and went, not knowing whither he went. He followed the boulevard till he reached the Rue Saint-Denis then he bethought

himself of Molineux, and turned to go toward the Cour Batavé. He mounted the same dirty tortuous staircase which he had ascended but lately in the pride of his glory. He remembered Molineux's peevish meanness, and winced at the thought of asking a favor of him. As on the occasion of his previous visit, he found the owner of house-property by the fireside, but this time he had eaten his breakfast. Birotteau formulated his demand.

"Renew a bill for twelve hundred francs?" said Molineux, with an incredulous smile. "You do not mean it, sir. If you have not twelve hundred francs on the 15th to meet my bill, will you please to send me back my receipt for rent that has not been paid? Ah! I should be angry; I do not use the slightest ceremony in money matters; my rents are my income. If I acted otherwise, how should I pay my way? A man in business will not disapprove of that wholesome rule. Money knows nobody; money has no ears; money has no heart. It is a cold winter, and here is firewood dearer again. If you do not pay on the 15th, you will receive a little summons by noon on the 16th. Pshaw! old Mitral, who serves your processes, acts for me too; he will send you your summons in an envelope, with due regard for your high position."

"A writ has never yet been served on me, sir," said Birotteau.

"Everything must have a beginning," retorted Molineux.

The perfumer was taken aback by the little old man's frank ferocity; the knell of credit rang in his ears; and every fresh stroke awoke memories of his own sayings as to bankruptcies, prompted by his remorseless jurisprudence. Those opinions of his seemed to be traced in letters of fire on the soft substance of his brain.

"By-the-by," Molineux was saying, "you forgot to write 'For value received in rent' across your bills; that might give me a preferential claim."

"My position forbids me to do anything to the prejudice

of my creditors," said Birotteau, dazed by that glimpse into the gulf before him.

"Good, sir, very good. I thought that I had nothing left to learn in my dealings with messieurs my tenants. You have taught me never to take bills in payment. Oh! I will take the thing into court, for your answer as good as tells me that you will not meet your engagements. The case touches every landlord in Paris."

Birotteau went out, sick of life. Feeble and tender natures lose heart at the first rebuff, just as a first success puts courage into them. César's only hope now lay in little Popinot's devotion; his thoughts naturally turned to him as he passed the Marché des Innocents.

"Poor boy! who would have told me this when I started him six weeks ago at the Tuileries!"

It was nearly four o'clock, the time when the magistrates leave the palais. As it fell out, the elder Popinot had gone to see his nephew. The examining magistrate, who in moral questions had a kind of second-sight which laid bare the secret motives of others, who discerned the underlying significance of the most commonplace actions of daily life, the germs of crime, the roots of a misdemeanor, was watching Birotteau, though Birotteau did not suspect it. Birotteau seemed to be put out by finding the uncle with the nephew; the perfumer's manner was constrained, he was preoccupied and thoughtful. Little Popinot, busy as usual with his pen behind his ear, always fell flat, figuratively speaking, before Césarine's father. César's meaningless remarks to his partner, to the judge's thinking, were merely screens, some important demand was about to be made. Instead of leaving the shop, therefore, the shrewd man of law stayed with his nephew in spite of his nephew, for he thought that César would try to get rid of him by making a move himself. And so it was. When Birotteau had gone the judge followed, but he noticed César lounging along the Rue des Cinq-Diamants in the

direction of the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher. This infinitely small matter bred suspicion in the mind of Popinot the elder; he mistrusted César's intentions, went along the Rue des Lombards, watched the perfumer go back to Anselme's shop, and promptly repaired thither.

"My dear Popinot," César had begun, "I have come to ask you to do me a service."

"What is there to be done?" asked Popinot, with generous eagerness.

"Ah! you give me life!" cried the good man, rejoicing in this warmth from the heart that sent a glow through him after those twenty-five days of glacial cold. "It is this, to allow me to draw a bill on you on account of my share of the profits; we will settle between ourselves."

Popinot looked steadily at César; César lowered his eyes. Just at that moment the magistrate reappeared.

"My boy—Oh! I beg your pardon, Monsieur Birotteau—my boy, I forgot to say that——" and with the imperative gesture learned in the exercise of his profession, the elder Popinot drew his nephew out into the street and marched him, bareheaded and in shirt-sleeves as he was, in the direction of the Rue des Lombards.

"Your old master will very likely find himself in such straits that he may be forced to file his schedule, nephew. Before a man comes to that, a man who, may be, has a record of forty years of upright dealing, nay the very best of men, in his anxiety to save his honor, will behave like the most frantic gambler. Men in that predicament will do anything. They will sell their wives and traffic in their daughters; they will bring their best friends into the scrape and pawn property which is not theirs; they will go to the gaming-table, turn actors—nay, liars; they will shed tears at need. In short, I have known them do the most extraordinary things. You yourself know how good-natured Roguin was, a man who looked as though butter would not melt in his mouth. I do

not press these conclusions home in Monsieur Birotteau's case; I believe that he is honest; but if he should ask you to do anything at all irregular, no matter what it is; if he should want you, for instance, to accept accommodation bills and so start you in a system which, to my way of thinking, is the beginning of all sorts of rascality (for it is counterfeit paper-money), promise me that you will sign nothing without first consulting me. You must remember that if you love his daughter, even for your own sake and hers, you must not spoil your future. If Monsieur Birotteau must come to grief, what is the use of going with him? What is it but cutting yourselves off from all chance of escape through your business, which will be his refuge?"

"Thank you, uncle; a word to the wise is sufficient," said Anselme; his uncle's words explained that heartrending cry from his master.

The merchant who dealt in druggists' oils and sundries looked thoughtful as he entered his dark store. Birotteau saw the change.

"Will you honor me by coming up to my room? we can talk more at our ease there than here. The assistants, busy as they are, might overhear us."

Birotteau followed Popinot, a victim to such cruel suspense as the condemned man knows, while he waits for a reprieve or the rejection of his appeal.

"My dear benefactor," Anselme began, "you do not doubt my devotion; it is blind. Permit me to ask but one thing, will this sum of money save you once and for all? Or will it merely put off some catastrophe? in which case, what is the use of carrying me with you? You want bills at ninety days. Very well, but I am sure that I myself shall not be able to meet them in three months' time."

Birotteau, white and grave, rose to his feet, and looked into Popinot's face.

Popinot, in alarm, cried, "I will do it if you wish it."

"Ungrateful boy!" cried the perfumer, gathering all his strength to hurl at Anselme the words which should brand him as infamous.

Birotteau walked to the door and went. Popinot, recovering from the sensation which the terrible words had produced in him, darted downstairs and rushed into the street, but saw no sign of the perfumer. The dreadful words of doom rang in the ears of Césarine's lover, poor César's face of anguish was always before his eyes; he lived, indeed, like Hamlet, haunted by a ghastly spectre.

Birotteau staggered along the streets like a drunken man. He found himself at last on the quay, and followed its course to Sèvres, where he spent the night in an inn, stupefied with sorrow; and his frightened wife dared not make any inquiries for him. Under such circumstances it is fatal to give the alarm rashly. Constance wisely immolated her anxiety to her husband's business reputation; she sat up all night for him, mingling prayers with her fears. Was César dead? Had he left Paris in the pursuit of some last hope? When morning came she behaved as though she knew the cause of his absence; but when at five o'clock César had not returned, she sent word to her uncle and begged him to go to the morgue. All through that day the brave woman sat at her desk, her daughter doing her embroidery by her side, and, neither sad nor smiling, both confronted the public with quiet faces.

When Pillerault came, he brought César with him; he had met his niece's husband after 'Change in the Palais Royal, hesitating to enter a gaming-house. That day was the 14th.

César could eat nothing at dinner. His stomach, too violently contracted, rejected food. It was a miserable meal; but it was not so bad as the evening that came after it. For the hundredth time, the merchant experienced one of the hideous alternations of despair and hope which wear out weak natures, when the soul passes through the whole scale of sensations, from the highest pitch of joy to the lowest depths of de-

spair. Derville, the consulting barrister, rushed into the splendid drawing-room. Mme. César had done everything in her power to keep her poor husband there; he had wanted to sleep in the attic, "so as not to see the monuments of my folly," he said.

"We have gained the day!" cried Derville.

At those words the lines in César's face were smoothed out, but his joy alarmed Pillerault and Derville. The two frightened women went away to cry in Césarine's room.

"Now I can borrow on the property!" exclaimed the perfumer.

"It would not be wise to do so," said Derville; "they have given notice of appeal, the Court-Royal may reverse the decision, but we shall know in a month's time."

"A month!"

César sank into a lethargy, from which no one attempted to rouse him. This species of intermittent catalepsy, during which the body lives and suffers while the action of the mind is suspended, this fortuitous respite from mental anguish, was regarded as a godsend by Constance, Césarine, Pillerault, and Derville—and they were right. In this way Birotteau was able to recover from the wear and tear of the night's emotions. He lay in a low chair by the fireside; over against him sat his wife, who watched him closely, with a sweet smile on her lips—one of those smiles which prove that women are nearer to the angels than men, in that they can blend infinite tenderness with the most sincere compassion, a secret known only to the angels whose presence is revealed to us in the dreams providentially scattered at long intervals in the course of human life. Césarine, sitting on a footstool at her mother's feet, now and again bent her head over her father's hands and brushed them lightly with her hair, as if by this caress she would fain communicate through the sense of touch the thoughts which at such a time are importunate when rendered by articulate speech.

Pillerault, that philosopher prepared for every emergency, sat in his armchair, like the statue of the chancellor of the hôpital in the peristyle of the Chamber of Deputies, wearing the same look of intelligence which is stamped on the features of an Egyptian sphinx, and talked in a low voice with Derville. Constance had recommended that the lawyer, whose discretion was above suspicion, should be consulted. With the schedule already drafted in her mind, she laid the situation before Derville; and after an hour's consultation or thereabout, held in the presence of the dozing perfumer, Derville looked at Pillerault and shook his head.

"Madame," said he, with the pitiless coolness of a man of business, "you must file your petition. Suppose that by some means or other you should contrive to meet your bills to-morrow, you must eventually pay at least three thousand francs before you can borrow on the whole of your landed property. To your liabilities, amounting to five hundred and fifty thousand francs, you oppose assets consisting of a very valuable and very promising piece of property which cannot be realized—you must give up in a given time, and it is better, in my opinion, to jump from the window than to roll down the stairs."

"I am of that opinion, too, my child," said Pillerault.

Mme. César and Pillerault both went to the door with Derville.

"Poor father!" said Césarine, rising softly to put a kiss on César's forehead. "Then could Anselme do nothing?" she asked, when her mother and uncle came in again.

"The ungrateful boy!" cried César. The name had touched the one sensitive spot in his memory, like the string of a piano resonant to the stroke of the hammer.

Little Popinot, meanwhile, since those words had been hurled at him like an anathema, had not had a moment's peace nor a wink of sleep. The hapless youth called down maledictions on his uncle, and went in search of him. To in-

duce experience and legal acumen to capitulate, young Popinot poured forth all a lover's eloquence, hoping to work on the feelings of a judge, but his words slid over the man of law like water over oilcloth.

"Commercial usage," pleaded Anselme, "permits a sleeping partner to draw to a certain extent upon his co-associate on account of profits; and in our partnership we ought to put it in practice. After looking into my business all round, I feel sure that I am good to pay forty thousand francs in three months' time. Birotteau's honesty permits me to feel confident that he will use the forty thousand francs to meet his bills. So, if he fails, the creditors will have no reason to complain of this action on our part. And, beside, uncle, I would rather lose forty thousand francs than give up Césarine. At this moment, while I am speaking, she will have heard of my refusal and I shall be lowered in her eyes. I said that I would give my life for my benefactor! I am in the case of the young sailor who must go to the bottom with his captain or the soldier who is bound to perish with his general."

"A good heart and a bad man of business; you will not be lowered in *my* eyes," said the judge, grasping his nephew's hand. "I have thought a good deal about this," he continued; "I know that you love Césarine to distraction; I think that you can obey the laws of your heart without breaking the laws of commerce."

"Oh! uncle, if you have found out a way, you will save my honor."

"Lend Birotteau fifty thousand francs on his proprietary interest in your Oil; it has become, as it were, a piece of property; I will draw up the document for you."

Anselme embraced his uncle, went home, made out bills for fifty thousand francs, and ran all the way from the Rue des Cinq-Diamants to the Place Vendôme; so that at the very moment when Césarine, her mother, and Pillerault were gazing at the perfumer, amazed by the sepulchral tone in

which the words, "Ungrateful boy!" were uttered in answer to the girl's question, the drawing-room door opened and Popinot appeared.

"My dearly beloved master," he said, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "here is the thing for which you asked me."

He held out the bills.

"Yes. I have thought carefully over my position; I shall meet them, never fear! Save your honor!"

"I was quite sure of him," cried Césarine, grasping Popinot's hand convulsively.

Mme. César embraced Popinot. The perfumer rose out of his chair, like the righteous at the sound of the last trump; he too was issuing from a tomb. Then with frenzied eagerness he clutched the fifty stamped papers.

"One moment!" cried the stern Uncle Pillerault, snatching up Popinot's bills. "One moment!"

The four persons composing this family group—César and his wife, Césarine and Popinot—bewildered by their uncle's interposition and by the tone in which he spoke, looked on in terror while he tore the bills to pieces and flung them into the fire, where they blazed up before any one of them could stop him.

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Sir!"

There were four voices and four hearts in one, a formidable unanimity. Uncle Pillerault put an arm around little Popinot, held him tightly to his heart, and put a kiss on his forehead.

"You deserve to be adored by any one who has a heart at all," said he. "If you loved my daughter, and she had a million, and you had nothing but *that*" (he pointed to the blackened scraps of paper), "you should marry her in a fortnight if she loved you. Your master," indicating César, "is

mad. Now, nephew," Pillerault began gravely, addressing the perfumer, "no more illusions! Business must be carried on with hard coin, and not with sentiments. This is sublime, but it is useless. I have been on 'Change for a couple of hours. No one will give you credit for two centimes; everybody is talking about your disaster; everybody knows that you could not get renewals, that you went to more than one banker and that they would have nothing to say to you, and all your other follies; it is known that you climbed six pairs of stairs to ask a landlord who chatters like a jackdaw to renew a bill for twelve hundred francs; everybody says that you gave a ball to hide your embarrassment. They will say directly that you had no money deposited with Roguin. Roguin is a blind, according to your enemies. One of my friends, commissioned to report everything, has brought confirmation of my suspicions. Every one expects that you will try to put Popinot's bills on the market; in fact, you set him up on purpose to tide you over your difficulties. In short, all the gossip and slander usually set in motion by any man who tries to mount a step in the social scale is going the round of business circles at this moment. You would spend a week in hawking Popinot's bills from place to place, you would meet with humiliating refusals, and nobody would have anything to do with them. There is nothing to show how many of them you are issuing, and people look to see you sacrificing this poor boy to save yourself. You would ruin Popinot's credit in pure waste. Do you know how much the most sanguine bill-discounter would give you for your fifty thousand francs? Twenty thousand; *twenty thousand*, do you understand? There are times in business when you must contrive to hold out for three days without food, as if you had the indigestion, and the fourth brings admission to the pantry of credit. You cannot hold out for the three days, and therein lies the whole position. But take heart, my poor nephew, you must file your schedule. Here is Popinot, and here am I; as soon as your

assistants have gone to bed we will set to work to spare you the misery of it."

"Uncle !——" cried the wretched perfumer, clasping his hands.

"César, do you really mean to arrive at a fraudulent bankruptcy with assets *nil?* Your interest in Popinot's business saves your honor."

This last fatal light thrown on his position made it clear to César; he saw the full extent of the hideous truth; he sank down into his low chair, and then on to his knees; his mind wandered, he became a child again. His wife thought the shock had killed him and knelt to raise him, but she clung close to him when she saw him clasp his hands and raise his eyes; and in spite of the presence of his uncle, his daughter, and Popinot, he began with remorseful resignation to repeat the sublime prayer of the church on earth—

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. *Give us this day our daily bread.* And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

Tears filled Pillerault's stoical eyes, and Césarine stood, white and rigid as marble, with her tear-stained face hidden on Anselme's shoulder. Then the old merchant took the young man's arm, "Let us go downstairs," he said.

At half-past eleven they left César in the care of his wife and daughter. Just at that moment Célestin, who had looked after the business during this storm, came upstairs and opened the drawing-room door. Césarine heard his footsteps and hurried forward to place herself so as to screen the prostrate master of the house.

"Among this evening's letters," he said, "there was one from Tours, the direction was not clear, it has been delayed.

I thought it might be from the master's brother, so I did not open it."

"Father," cried Césarine, "there is a letter from uncle at Tours."

"Ah! I am saved!" exclaimed César. "My brother! my brother!" and he kissed the letter, which ran thus:

François Birotteau to César Birotteau.

"TOURS, 17th.

"MY BELOVED BROTHER:—Your letter has given me the keenest distress; and so when I had read it, I offered up to God on your behalf the holy sacrifice of the mass, praying Him, by the blood shed for us by our divine Redeemer, to look mercifully upon you in your affliction. And now that I have put up my prayer *pro meo fratre Cæsare*, my eyes are filled with tears to think that by misfortune I am separated from you at a time when you must need the support of a brother's affection. But then I bethought me that the worthy and venerated M. Pillerault will doubtless fill my place. My dear César, in the midst of your troubles, do not forget that this life of ours is a life of trial and a transition state; that one day we shall be rewarded if we have suffered for the holy name of God, for His Holy Church, for putting in practice the doctrines of the Gospel, or for leading a virtuous life; if it were not so, the things of this present world would be unintelligible. I repeat these words, though I know how good and pious you are, because it may happen to those who, like you, are tossed by the tempests of this world and launched upon the perilous seas of human concerns, to be led to blaspheme in their distresses, distracted as they are by pain. Do not curse the men who will wound you, nor God, who mingles bitterness with your life at His will. Look not on the earth, but rather keep your eyes lifted to heaven; thence comes comfort for the weak, the riches of the poor are there, and the fears of the rich——"

"Oh, Birotteau," interrupted his wife, "just miss that out and see if he is sending us anything."

"We will often read it over," said her husband, drying his eyes. He opened the letter and a draft on the Treasury fell out. "I was quite sure of him, poor brother," said Birotteau, picking up the draft.

"I went to see Mme. de Listomère," he continued, reading in a voice choked with tears, "and without giving a reason for my request, I begged her to lend me all that she could spare, so as to swell the amount of my savings. Her generosity enables me to make up the sum of a thousand francs, which I send you in the form of a draft by the receiver-general of Tours upon the Treasury."

"A handsome advance!" said Constance, looking at Césarine.

"By retrenching some superfluities in my way of living, I shall be able to repay Mme. de Listomère the money I have borrowed of her in three years' time; so do not trouble about it, my dear César. I am sending you all that I have in the world, with the wish that the sum may assist you to bring your difficulties to a happy termination; doubtless they are but momentary. I know your delicacy, and wish to anticipate your scruples. Do not dream of paying any interest on the amount, nor of returning it in the day of prosperity, which will dawn for you before long, if God deigns to grant the petitions which I make daily for you. After your last letter, received two years ago, I thought that you were rich, and that I might give my savings to the poor; but now all that I have belongs to you. When you have weathered this passing squall, keep the money for my niece Césarine, so that when she is established in life she may spend it on some trifle which will remind her of an old uncle whose hands are always

raised to heaven to implore God's blessing upon her, and for all those who shall be dear to her. Bear in mind, in fact, dear César, that I am a poor priest, living by the grace of God, as the wild-birds live in the fields, walking quietly in my own path, striving to keep the commandments of our divine Saviour, and consequently needing but little. So do not have the least hesitation in your difficult position, and think of me as one who loves you tenderly. Our excellent Abbé Chapeloud (to whom I have not said a word about your strait) knows that I am writing to you, and wishes me to send the most kindly messages to all your family, with wishes for your continued prosperity. May God vouchsafe to preserve you and your wife and daughter in good health; and I pray for patience to you all and courage in the day of adversity.

"FRANÇOIS BIROTTEAU.

"Priest of the Cathedral Church of Tours and Vicar of the Parish Church of Saint-Gatien."

"A thousand francs!" cried Mme. Birotteau, in vehement anger.

"Lock it up," César said gravely; "it is all he has. Beside, it belongs to our Césarine, and should enable us to live without asking anything of our creditors."

"And then they will believe that you have taken away large sums."

"I shall show them his letter."

"They will say that it is a fraud."

"Oh! my God! my God!" cried César, appalled at this; "I have often thought that very thing of poor folk who, no doubt, were just in my position."

Mother and daughter were both too anxious about César to leave him, and they sewed on by his side. There was a deep silence. At two o'clock in the morning the drawing-room door was softly opened and Popinot beckoned to Mme. César

to come downstairs. At the sight of his niece, who had followed him into the store, Uncle Pillerault took off his spectacles.

"There is hope yet, my child," he said; "all is not over; but your husband could not stand the strain of the ups and downs of this business, so Popinot and I will try to arrange it. Do not leave the store to-morrow, and take down the names of all the holders of the bills; we have all the day till four o'clock. This is my idea: There is nothing to fear from Ragon or from me. Suppose now that Roguin had paid over to the vendors the hundred thousand francs you deposited with him—in that case, you would no more have them than you have them to-day. You have to meet bills to the amount of a hundred and forty thousand francs, payable to Claparon's order; you must pay them anyhow, so it is not Roguin's bankruptcy which is ruining you. Now, to meet your liabilities, I see forty thousand francs to be borrowed sooner or later on your factory, and sixty thousand francs in Popinot's bills. So you may struggle through; for, once through, you can raise money on that building land by the Madeleine. If your principal creditor agrees to help you, I shall not consider my fortune; I will sell my *rentes;* I shall be without bread; Popinot will be between life and death; and, as for you, you will be at the mercy of the smallest events. But the Oil will give a good return, no doubt. Popinot and I have been consulting together; we will support you in this struggle. Oh, I will eat my dry bread gaily, if success dawns on the horizon. But everything depends on Gigonnet and on Claparon and his associates. We are going to see Gigonnet between seven and eight, Popinot and I, and then we shall know what to make of their intentions."

Constance, carried away by her feelings, put her arms about her uncle, and could not speak for tears and sobs. Neither Popinot nor Pillerault could know that Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, and Claparon were but two of du Tillet's doubles, and

that du Tillet had set his heart upon reading this terrible paragraph in the "Gazette:"

"Decree of the Tribunal of Commerce. M. César Birotteau, wholesale perfumer, of 397 Rue Saint-Honoré, Paris, declared a bankrupt, date provisionally fixed, 16th of January, 1819. Registrar: M. Gobenheim-Keller. Agent: M. Molineux."

Anselme and Pillerault studied César's affairs till daylight came, and at eight o'clock that morning the two heroic comrades, the old veteran and the subaltern of yesterday, neither of whom was destined to experience on his own account the dreadful agony of mind endured by those who go up and down the stairs of Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, betook themselves without a word to the Rue Grenétat. It was a painful time for both of them. More than once Pillerault passed his hand over his forehead.

In the Rue Grenétat multifarious small trades are carried on in every overcrowded house. Every building has a repulsive aspect. The hideousness of these houses has a distinct quality of its own, in which the mean squalor of a poor industrial neighborhood predominates.

Old Gigonnet inhabited the fourth floor in one of these houses. All the windows, with their dirty, square panes of glass, were secured to the frames by pivots, and tilted to admit the air; you walked straight up the staircase from the street, and the porter lived in the box on the mezzanine floor lighted from the staircase. Every one in the house, except Gigonnet, plied some handicraft; workmen came and went all day long. Every step on the stairs, where filth was allowed to accumulate, was plastered over with a coating of mud, hard or soft, according to the state of the weather. Each landing on this fetid stair displayed the name of some craftsman painted in gilt letters on a sheet of iron, which was

painted red and varnished, and some sample of the man's achievements in his trade. The doors, for the most part, stood ajar, affording glimpses of grotesque combinations of industry and domestic life; the sounds which issued thence, snatches of song, yells, whistlings, and uncouth growls recalled the noises heard at the Jardin des Plantes toward four o'clock. The smartest braces for the trade in the *article Paris* were being made in a loathsome den on the first floor; on the second, among heaps of the most unsavory litter, the manufacture of the dantiest cardboard boxes, displayed at the New Year in store windows, was carried on. Gigonnet, who was worth eighteen hundred thousand francs, lived and died on the fourth floor in this house. Nothing would induce him to leave it, although his niece, Mme. Saillard, offered him rooms in a mansion in the Place Royale.

"Courage!" said Pillerault, as he jerked the cord of the lever bell-pull that hung by Gigonnet's neat gray-painted door.

Gigonnet himself opened it, and the perfumer's two champions in the lists of bankruptcy went through a formal, chilly-looking room, with curtainless windows, and entered a second, where all three seated themselves.

The bill-discounter took up his position before a grate full of ashes, in which the wood maintained a stubborn resistance to the flames. The sight of his green cardboard cases and the monastic austerity of the office, windy as a cave, sent a cold chill through Popinot. His dazed eyes wandered over the pattern of the cheap wall-paper—tricolor flowers on a bluish background—which had been hung some five-and-twenty years back; and turned from that depressing sight to the ornaments on the chimney-piece, a lyre-shaped clock and oval vases, blue Sèvres ware, handsomely mounted in gilt copper. This bit of flotsam, recovered by Gigonnet from the wreck of Versailles, when the palace was sacked by the populace, came from a queen's boudoir, but the magnificent-looking ornaments were

flanked by a couple of wrought-iron candlesticks of the commonest description, a harsh contrast which continually reminded the beholder of the manner in which their owner had come by those royal splendors.

"I know that you cannot come on your own account," said Gigonnet, "but for the great Birotteau. Well, what is it, my friends?"

"I know that you have nothing to learn, so we will be brief," said Pillerault. "Have you his bills payable to Claparon?"

"Yes."

"Will you exchange the first fifty thousand francs that will fall due for bills accepted by Monsieur Popinot here, less the discount, of course?"

Gigonnet lifted the terrible green cap, which seemed to have been born with him, and displayed a bald butter-colored pate, then with a Voltairean grin—

"You want to pay me in oil for hair," he remarked, "and what should I do with it?"

"When you joke, it is time for us to take ourselves off," said Pillerault.

"You speak like the sensible man that you are," said Gigonnet, with a flattering smile.

"Very well, and how if I back Monsieur Popinot's bills?" asked Pillerault, making a final effort.

"You are as good as gold ingots, Monsieur Pillerault; but I have no use for gold ingots, all that I want is current coin."

Pillerault and Popinot took their leave and went. Even at the foot of the staircase Popinot's knees still shook under him.

"Is he a man?" he asked of Pillerault.

"People say so," answered the older one. "Keep this little interview always in mind, Anselme! You have seen what money-lending is, stripped of its masquerade and palaver.

Some unforeseen event turns the screw upon us, and we are the grapes and bill-discounters the barrels. This speculation in building land is a good piece of business, no doubt; Gigonnet, or somebody behind him, has a mind to cut César's throat and to step into his shoes. That is all; there is no help for it now. And this is what comes of borrowing money; never resort to it."

It had been a dreadful morning for Mme. Birotteau. For the first time she had taken the addresses of those who came for money, and had sent away the bank collector without paying him; yet the brave woman was glad to spare her husband these humiliations. Toward eleven o'clock she saw Pillerault and Anselme returning; she had been expecting them with ever-increasing anxiety, and now she read her doom in their faces. There was no help for it, the schedule must be filed.

"He will die of grief," said the poor wife.

"I could wish that he might," said Pillerault gravely; "but he is so devout that, as things stand, his director the Abbé Loraux alone can save him."

Pillerault, Popinot, and Constance remained below, while one of the assistants went for the Abbé Loraux. The abbé should prepare Birotteau for the schedule which Célestin was copying out fair for his master's signature. The assistants were in despair; they loved their employer. At four o'clock the good priest came. Constance told him all the details of the calamity which had befallen them, and the abbé went upstairs like a soldier mounting to the breach.

"I know why you have come," César exclaimed.

"My son," said the priest, "your sentiments of submission to the divine will have long been known to me, now you are called upon to put them in practice. Keep your eyes fixed ever upon the cross, contemplate the cross without ceasing, and think of the cup of humiliation of which the Saviour of men was compelled to drink, think of the anguish of His

passion, and thus you may endure the mortifications sent to you by God——"

"My brother, the abbé, has already prepared me," said César, holding out the letter, which he read over again, to his confessor.

"You have a good brother," said M. Loraux, "a virtuous and sweet-natured wife, and a loving daughter, two real friends in your uncle and dear Anselme, two indulgent creditors in the Ragons. All these kind hearts will pour balm into your wounds continually, and will help you to carry your cross. Promise me to bear yourself with a martyr's courage and to take the blow without wincing."

The abbé coughed, a signal to Pillerault in the next room.

"My submission is unlimited," said César calmly. "Disgrace has come upon me; I ought only to think of making reparation."

Césarine and the priest were both very much surprised by poor Birotteau's tone and look. And yet nothing was more natural. Every man bears a definitely known misfortune better than suspense and constant alternations of excessive joy at one moment, followed on the next by the last extremity of anguish.

"I have been dreaming for twenty-two years," he said, "and to-day I wake to find myself staff in hand again." César had once more become the Tourangeau peasant.

At these words Pillerault held his nephew tightly in his arms. César looked up and saw his wife and Célestin, the latter with significant documents in his hands; then he glanced calmly round the group; all the eyes that met his were sad but friendly.

"One moment!" he said, and unfastening his cross of the Legion of Honor, which he gave to the Abbé Loraux, "you will give that back to me when I can wear it without a blush. Célestin," he continued, turning to his assistant, "send in my resignation; I am no longer deputy-mayor. The abbé

will dictate the letter to you, date it January 14th, and send Raguet with it to Monsieur de la Billardière."

Célestin and the Abbé Loraux went downstairs. For nearly a quarter of an hour perfect silence prevailed in César's study. Such firmness took the family by surprise. Célestin and the abbé came back again, and César signed the letter of resignation; but when Pillerault laid the schedule before him poor Birotteau could not repress a dreadful nervous tremor.

"Oh, God! have mercy upon us!" he said, as he signed the terrible instrument and handed it to Célestin.

Then Anselme Popinot spoke, and a gleam of light crossed his clouded brow. "Monsieur and Madame," he said, "will you grant me the honor of mademoiselle's hand?"

This speech brought tears into the eyes of all who heard it; César alone rose to his feet, took Anselme's hand, and said in a hollow voice, but with dry eyes, "My boy, you shall never marry a bankrupt's daughter."

Anselme looked Birotteau steadily in the face.

"Will you promise, sir, in the presence of your whole family, to consent to our marriage, if mademoiselle will take me for her husband, on the day when you shall have paid all your creditors in full?"

There was a moment's pause. Every one felt the influence of the emotion recorded in the perfumer's weary face.

"Yes," he said at last.

Anselme stretched out his hand to Césarine with an indescribable gesture; she gave him hers, and he kissed it.

"Do you also consent?" he asked her.

"Yes," she said.

"So, I'm really one of the family. I have a right to interest myself in your affairs," was his comment, with an enigmatical look.

Anselme hurried away lest he should betray a joy in too great contrast with his master's trouble. Anselme was not

exactly delighted with the bankruptcy; but so absolute, so egoistical is love, that Césarine herself in her inmost heart felt a glow of happiness strangely at variance with her bitter distress of mind.

"While we are about it, let us strike every blow at once," said Pillerault in Constance's ear.

An involuntary gesture, a sign not of assent, but of sorrow, was Mme. Birotteau's answer.

"What do you mean to do, nephew?" said Pillerault, turning to César.

"To continue the business."

"I am not of that opinion," said Pillerault. "Go into liquidation, let your assets go to your creditors in the shape of dividend, and go out of business altogether. I have often thought what I should do if I were placed in a similar position. (Oh! you must be prepared for everything! The merchant who does not contemplate possible insolvency is like a general who does not lay his account with a defeat; he is only half a merchant.) I myself should never have gone on again. What! Be compelled to blush before men whom I should have wronged, to endure their suspicious looks and unspoken reproaches? I can think of the guillotine—in one instant all is over; but to carry a head on your shoulders to have it cut off daily is a kind of torture from which I should escape. Plenty of men begin again as though nothing had happened; so much the better for them!—they are braver than Claude-Joseph Pillerault. If you pay your way (and pay ready money you must) people will say that you managed to save something for yourself; and if you have not a halfpenny, you will never recover. 'Tis good-evening to you. Surrender your assets, let them sell you up, and do something else."

"But what?" asked César.

"Eh! try for a place under the Government," said Pillerault; "you have influence, have you not? There are the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt, Madame de Mortsauf,

Monsieur de Vandenesse! Write to them, go to see them, they will find you some post in the household, with a thousand crowns or so hanging to it; your wife will earn as much again; your daughter, perhaps, may do the same. The case is not desperate. You three among you will earn something like ten thousand francs a year. In ten years' time you will be in a position to pay a hundred thousand francs, for you will have no expenses meanwhile; your womankind shall have fifteen hundred francs from me; and, as for you, we shall see."

It was Constance, and not César, who pondered these wise words, and Pillerault went on 'Change. At that time stock-brokers used to congregate in a provisional structure of planks and scaffolding, a large circular room, with an entrance in the Rue Feydeau. The perfumer's failure was already known and had created a sensation in high commercial circles, for their prevailing politics were constitutional at that time. Birotteau was a conspicuous personage, and envied by many. Merchants, on the other hand, who leaned toward Liberalism, regarded Birotteau's too celebrated ball as an audacious attempt to trade on their sentiments, for the Opposition were fain to monopolize patriotism. Royalists were allowed to love the King, but the love of their country was the exclusive privilege of the Left, the Left was for the people; and those in power had no right to rejoice thus vicariously through the administration, in a national event which the Liberals meant to exploit for their own benefit. For which reasons the fall of a Ministerialist in favor at Court, of an incorrigible Royalist who had insulted Liberty by fighting against the glorious French Revolution on Vendémiaire 13th, set all tongues wagging on 'Change, and was received with almost universal applause.

Pillerault wanted to know what was being said, and to study public opinion. He went up to one of the most eager groups; du Tillet, Gobenheim-Keller, Nucingen, old Guillaume and his son-in-law Joseph Lebas, Claparon, Gigonnet, Mongenod,

Camusot, Gobseck, Adolphe Keller, Palma, Chiffreville, Matifat, Grindot, and Lourdois were discussing the news.

"Well, well, how careful one had need to be!" said Gobenheim, addressing du Tillet; "my brothers-in-law all but opened an account with Birotteau, it was a near thing."

"I am let in for ten thousand francs myself," said du Tillet; "he came to me a fortnight ago and I let him have the money on his bare signature. But he obliged me once, and I shall lose it without regret."

"Your nephew is like the rest," said Lourdois, addressing Pillerault. "Gave entertainments. I can imagine that a rogue might try to throw dust in your eyes to induce confidence; but how could a man who passed for the cream of honest folk descend to the stale mountebank's trickery that never fails to catch us?"

"Like leeches," commented Gobseck.

"Only trust a man if he lives in a den like Claparon," said Gigonnet.

"Vell," said the stout Baron Nucingen, for du Tillet's benefit, "you haf dried to blay me a nice drick, sending Pirôdôt to me. I do not know," he went on, turning to Gobenheim the manufacturer, "why he did not send rount to me for vifty tousend vrancs; I should haf led him haf dem."

"Oh! not you, Monsieur le Baron," said Joseph Lebas. "You must have known quite well that the bank had refused his paper; you were on the Discount Committee which declined it. This poor man, for whom I still feel a very great respect, fails under singular circumstances——"

Pillerault grasped Joseph Lebas' hand.

"It is, in fact, impossible to explain how the thing has happened," said Mongenod, "except by the theory that there is some one behind Gigonnet, some banker whose intention it is to spoil the Madeleine speculation."

"The thing which has happened to him always happens to people who go out of their own line," said Claparon, inter-

rupting Mongenod. "If he had brought out his Cephalic Oil himself, instead of sending up the price of building lots in Paris by rushing into land speculation, he would have lost his hundred thousand francs through Roguin, but he would not have gone bankrupt. He will start afresh under the name of Popinot."

"Keep an eye on Popinot," said Gigonnet.

According to this crowd of merchants, Roguin was "poor Roguin;" the perfumer was that "unlucky Birotteau." A great passion seemed to excuse the one, the other appeared the more to blame on account of his pretensions. Gigonnet left the Exchange and took the Rue Perrin-Gasselin on his way home to the Rue Grenétat. He looked in on Mme. Madou, the dry-fruit saleswoman.

"Well, old lady," said he, with his cruel good humor, "and how are we getting on in our way of business?"

"Middling," said Mme. Madou respectfully, and she offered the money-lender her only armchair with a friendly officiousness which she had never shown to any one else but the dear departed.

Mother Madou, who would fell a carman with a blow if he were refractory or carried a joke too far, who had not feared to assist at the storming of the Tuileries on the 10th of October, who railed at her best customers (for that matter, she was capable of heading a deputation of the Dames de la Halle, and speaking to the King himself without a tremor)—Angélique Madou received Gigonnet with the utmost respect. She was helpless in his presence; she winced under his hard eyes. It will be a long while yet before the executioner ceases to be a terror to the people, and Gigonnet was the executioner of the small traders. The man who sets money in circulation is more looked up to in the Great Market than any other power; all other human institutions are as naught compared with him. For them the Commissaire is Justice personified, and with the Commissaire they of the Market become familiar. But the

sight of the money-lender intrenched behind his green cardboard cases, of the usurer whom they implore with fear in their hearts, dries up the sources of wit, parches the throat, and abashes the bold eyes; the people grow respectful in his presence.

"Have you come to ask something of me?" said she.

"A mere trifle; be prepared to refund the amount of Birotteau's bills, the old man has gone bankrupt, so all outstanding claims must be sent in; I shall send you in a statement to-morrow."

The pupils of Mme. Madou's eyes first contracted like the eyes of a cat, then flames leaped forth from them.

"O the beggar! O the scamp! and he came here himself to tell me that he was deputy-mayor, piling on his lies. The Lord ha' mercy! That's just the way with business; there is no trusting mayors nowadays; the Government cheats us! You wait, I will have the money out of them, I will——"

"Eh! every one comes out of this sort of thing the best way he can, my little dear!" said Gigonnet, lifting one leg with the precise little gesture of a cat picking its way among puddles, a trick to which he owed his nickname.* "Some swells have been let in who mean to get themselves out of the scrape——"

"Good! good! I will get my hazelnuts out. Marie Jeanne! my clogs and my lamb's-wool shawl. Quick! or I will lend you a clout that will warm your cheeks."

"That will make it hot for them yonder up the street," said Gigonnet to himself, as he rubbed his hands. "Du Tillet will be satisfied; there will be a scandal in the quarter. What that poor devil of a perfumer can have done to him, I don't know; for my own part, I am as sorry for the man as for a dog with a broken paw. He isn't a man; he has no fight in him."

Mme. Madou broke out like an insurrection in the Fau-

* Gigonnet, from *Gigotter*, to kick the legs about.

bourg Saint-Antoine toward seven o'clock that evening, and swept to the luckless Birotteau's door, which she opened with unnecessary violence, for her walk had had an exciting effect.

"Brood of vermin, I must have my money, I want my money! You give me my money! or I will have sachets and satin gimcracks and fans till I have the worth of my two thousand francs! A mayor robbing the people! Did any one ever see the like? If you don't pay me, I will send him to jail; I will go for the public prosecutor; I will put the whole posse of them on his tracks! I do not stir from here without my money, in fact."

She looked as if she would open the glass-door of a cupboard in which expensive goods were kept.

"The Madou is about helping herself," said Célestin in a low voice to his neighbor. The lady overheard the remark, for during a paroxysm of rage the senses are either deadened or preternaturally alert, according to the temperament. She bestowed on Célestin the most vigorous box on the ear ever given and received in a perfumer's store.

"Learn to respect women, my cherub," quoth she, "and not to bedraggle the names of the people you rob."

Mme. Birotteau came forward from the back-store. Her husband by chance was also there; in spite of Pillerault he chose to remain, carrying his humility and obedience to the law so far as to be ready to submit to be put in prison. "Madame," said Constance, "for heaven's sake, do not bring a crowd together in the street."

"Eh! let them come in," cried the saleswoman, "I will tell them about it; it will make them laugh! Yes, my goods and the francs I made by the sweat of my brow go for you to give balls. You go dressed like a queen of France, forsooth, and fleece poor lambs like me for the wool! *Jésus!* stolen goods would burn *my* shoulders, I know! I have nothing but shoddy on my carcase, but it is my own! Bandits and thieves! my money, or——"

"I MUST HAVE MY MONEY, I WANT MY MONEY!"



She pounced upon a pretty inlaid case full of costly perfumery.

"Leave it alone, madame," said César, appearing on the scene; "nothing here belongs to me, it is all the property of my creditors. I have nothing left but myself; and if you have a mind to seize me and put me in jail, I give you my word of honor" (a tear overflowed his eyes at this) "that I will wait here for your process-server, police-officer, and bailiff's men."

From his tone and gesture, he evidently meant to do as he said; Mme. Madou's anger died down.

"A notary has absconded with my money, and the disasters which I cause come through no fault of mine," César went on; "but in time you shall be paid, if I have to work myself to death and earn the money by my hands as a market-porter."

"Come, you are a good man," said the market-woman. "Excuse my speaking, madame; but I shall have to fling myself into the river, for Gigonnet will be down upon me, and I have nothing but bills at ten months to give for your cursed paper."

"Come round and see me to-morrow morning," said Pillerault, coming forward; "I will arrange the business for you at five per cent. with a friend of mine."

"Well! that is good Father Pillerault! Why, yes, he is your uncle," she went on, turning to Constance. "Come, now, you are honest folk; I shall not lose anything, shall I? Good-by till to-morrow, old Brutus," she added, for the benefit of the retired hardware merchant.

César insisted on remaining amid the ruins of his glory and would hear of no other course; he said that by so doing he could explain his position to all his creditors. In this determination Uncle Pillerault upheld César in spite of the entreaties of his niece. César was persuaded to go upstairs, and then the wily old man hurried to M. Haudry, put César's case

before him, obtained a prescription for a sleeping-draught, had it made up, and went back to spend the evening in his nephew's house. With Césarine's assistance he constrained César to drink as they did; the narcotic did its work; and fourteen hours later Birotteau awoke to find himself in Pillerault's own bedroom in the Rue des Bourdonnais, a prisoner in the house of his uncle, who slept on a camp bedstead put up in the sitting-room.

When Pillerault had put César into the cab, and Constance had heard it roll away, then her courage failed her. Our strength is often called forth by the necessity of sustaining some one weaker than ourselves; and the poor woman, now that she was left alone with her daughter, wept as she would have wept for César if he had been lying dead.

"Mamma," said Césarine, seating herself on her mother's knee, with the gracious kitten-like ways that women only display for each other, "you said that if I bore my part bravely, you would be able to face adversity. So do not cry, mother dear. I am ready to work in a store; I will forget what we have been; I will be a forewoman, as you were when you were a girl; you shall never hear a regret or a complaint from me. And I have a hope. Did you not hear Monsieur Popinot?"

"Dear boy! he shall not be my son-in-law."

"Oh! mamma——"

"He will be my own son."

"There is this one good thing about trouble, it teaches us to know our real friends," said Césarine; and, changing places with her mother, she at last comforted her and soothed the poor woman's grief.

The next morning Constance left a note for the Duc de Lenoncourt, one of the first gentlemen of the bedchamber. She asked for an interview at a certain hour. Meanwhile, she went to M. de la Billardière, told him of the predicament in which César found himself in consequence of Roguin's

flight from the country, and begged the mayor to give her his support with the Duke and to speak for her, for she feared that she might express herself ill. She wanted some post for Birotteau. Birotteau would be the most honest of cashiers, if there are degrees in the quality of honesty.

"The King has just appointed the Comte de Fontaine as comptroller-general of the royal household; there is no time to be lost."

At two o'clock La Billardière and Mme. César ascended the great staircase of the Hôtel de Lenoncourt in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and were brought into the presence of one of the nobles highest in the King's favor, in so far as Louis XVIII. could be said to have preferences. The gracious reception accorded to her by a great noble, one of the little group who formed a connecting link between the eighteenth-century noblesse and those of the nineteenth, put hope into Mme. César. The perfumer's wife was great and simple in her sorrow; sorrow ennobles the most commonplace natures, for it has a grandeur of its own, but only those who are true and sincere can take its polish. Constance was essentially sincere. It was a question of prompt application to the King.

In the midst of the discussion, M. de Vandenesse was announced.

"Here is your deliverer," exclaimed the Duke.

Mme. Birotteau was not unknown to the young man, who had been once or twice to the perfumer's store for those trifles which are as often of as much importance as great things. The Duke explained La Billardière's views; and, when Vandenesse learned the disasters, he went immediately with La Billardière to see the Comte de Fontaine on behalf of the Marquise d'Uxelles' godson. Mme. Birotteau was asked to await the result.

M. le Comte de Fontaine, like La Billardière, was one of the provincial noblesse, the almost unknown heroes of La

Vendée. Birotteau was no stranger to him, for he had seen the perfumer at the Queen of Roses in former days. At that time, those who had shed their blood for the Royalist cause enjoyed privileges, which the King kept secret for fear of hurting Liberal susceptibilities, and M. de Fontaine, one of the King's favorites, was supposed to be in the confidence of Louis XVIII. Not only did this influential person definitely promise to obtain a post for the perfumer, but he went to the Duc de Lenoncourt, then in attendance, to ask him for a moment's speech with the King that evening, and to entreat for La Billardière an audience with Monsieur the King's brother, who had a particular regard for the old Vendean.

That very evening M. le Comte de Fontaine came from the Tuileries to inform Mme. Birotteau that, as soon as her husband had received his discharge, he would be appointed to a post worth two thousand five hundred francs per annum in the Sinking Fund Department, all places in the household being at that time filled with noble supernumeraries to whom the Royalist family were bound.

This success was but a part of the task undertaken by Mme. Birotteau. The poor woman went to Joseph Lebas at the sign of the Cat and Racket in the Rue Saint-Denis. On the way thither she met Mme. Roguin in her showy carriage, doubtless on a shopping expedition. Their eyes met, and the visible confusion on the beautiful face of the notary's wife, at this meeting with the woman who had been brought to ruin, gave Constance courage.

"Never will I drive in a carriage paid for with other people's money," said she to herself.

Welcomed by Joseph Lebas, she asked him to look for a situation for her daughter in some respectable house of business. Lebas made no promises, but a week later it was arranged that Césarine should be placed in a branch of one of the largest dry goods establishments in Paris, which had just been opened in the Quartier des Italiens. She was to live in the house,

and to take charge of the store and counting-room, with a salary of three thousand francs. She would represent the master and mistress, and the forewoman was to act under her orders.

As for Mme. César herself, she went on the same day to ask Popinot to allow her to take charge of the books, the correspondence, and the household. Popinot knew well that this was the one commercial house in which the perfumer's wife might take a subordinate position and still receive the respect due her. The noble-hearted boy installed her in his house, gave her a salary of three thousand francs, arranged to give his own room to her, and went up into the attic. And so it came to pass that the beautiful woman, after one short month spent amid novel splendors, was compelled to take up her abode in the poor room where Gaudissart, Anselme, and Finot had inaugurated the Cephalic Oil.

The Tribunal of Commerce had appointed Molineux as agent, and he came to take formal possession of César's property. Constance, with Célestin's help, went through the inventory with him; and then mother and daughter went to stay with Pillerault. They went out on foot and simply dressed, and without turning their heads, and this was their leave-taking of the house in which they had spent the third part of a lifetime. Silently they walked to the Rue des Bourdonnais, and dined with César, for the first time since their separation. It was a melancholy dinner. They had each had time to think over the position, to weigh the burden laid upon them, to estimate their courage. All three were like sailors, prepared to face the coming tempest without blinking the danger. Birotteau took heart again when he heard that great personages had interested themselves for him and provided for his future; but he broke down when he heard of the arrangement which had been made for his daughter. Then hearing how bravely his wife had begun to work again, he held out his hand to her.

Tears filled Pillerault's eyes for the last time in his life at the sight of this pathetic picture of the father, mother, and daughter united in one embrace; while Birotteau, the most helpless and downcast of the three, held up his hand and cried, "We must hope!"

"To save expense, you must live here with me; you shall have my room and share my bread. For a long time past I have been tired of living alone; you will take the place of that poor boy I lost. And it will only be a step from here to your office in the Rue d'Oratoire."

"Merciful God!" cried Birotteau. "There is a star to guide me when the storm is at its height."

By resignation to his fate, the victim of a misfortune consumes his misfortune. Birotteau could fall no further; he had accepted the position, he became strong again.

In France, when a merchant has filed his petition, the only thing he need trouble himself to do is to retreat to some oasis at home or abroad where he may passively exist like the child that he is in the eye of the law; theoretically he is a minor, and incapable of acting in any capacity as a citizen.* Practically, however, he is by no means a nullity. He does not, indeed, show his face until he receives a "certificate of immunity from arrest" (which no registrar nor creditor has been known to refuse), for if he is found at large without it he is liable to be put in prison; but once provided with his safe-conduct, his flag of truce, he can take a stroll through the enemy's camp, not from idle curiosity, but to counteract and thwart the evil intentions of the law with regard to bankrupts.

A prodigious development of perverse ingenuity is the direct result of any law which touches private interests. The

* In France a bankrupt loses his civil and political status; he recovers the right of administering his own affairs after his discharge; but the disabilities are only removed by rehabilitation. This is an order granted by the court when it is proved that the bankrupt has paid debts and costs in full.

one thought of a bankrupt, as of everybody else who finds his purposes crossed in any way by the law of the land, is how to evade it. The period of civil death, during which time a bankrupt must be considered as a kind of commercial chrysalis, lasts for three months or thereabouts, the interval required for the formalities which must be gone through before creditors and debtor sign a treaty of peace, otherwise known as a *concordat*, a word which indicates very clearly that concord reigns after the storm raised by the clashing of various interests which run counter to one another.

Directly the schedule is deposited, the Tribunal of Commerce appoints a registrar to watch over the interests of the throng of unascertained creditors on the one hand, and on the other to protect the bankrupt from the vexatious importunities and inroads of infuriated creditors, a double part which presents magnificent possibilities if registrars had but time to develop them. The registrar authorizes an agent by procuration to take formal possession of the bankrupt's property, bills, and effects, and the agent checks the statement of assets in the schedule; lastly, the clerk of the court convenes a meeting of creditors, by tuck of drum; that is to say, by advertisements in the newspapers. The creditors, genuine or otherwise, are called upon to assemble and agree among themselves to appoint provisional trustees, who shall replace the agent, step into the bankrupt's shoes, and, by a legal fiction, become indeed the bankrupt himself. These have power to realize everything, to make compromises, or to sell outright; in short, to wind up the whole business for the benefit of the creditors, provided that the bankrupt makes no opposition. As a rule, in Paris, the bankruptcy is not carried beyond the stage of the provisional trustees, and for the following reasons:

The nomination of trustees is a proceeding calculated to stir up more angry feeling than any other resolution which can be passed by an assembly of men, deluded, baffled, befooled, ensnared, bamboozled, robbed, cheated, and thirsting for ven-

geance; and albeit, as a general thing, the creditor is cheated, robbed, bamboozled, ensnared, befooled, baffled, and deluded, in Paris no commercial crisis, no feeling, however high, can last for three mortal months. Nothing in commerce but a bill of exchange is capable of starting up clamorous for payment at the expiration of ninety days. Before the three months are out, all the creditors, exhausted by the wear and tear, and worn out by the marches and countermarches of the liquidation, sleep soundly by the side of their excellent little wives. These facts may enable those who are not Frenchmen to understand how it comes to pass that the appointment of provisional trustees is usually final; out of a thousand provisional trustees, there are not five who are appointed to carry the thing further. The reasons of the swift abjuration of commercial enmity which has its source in a failure may be imagined; but for those who have not the good fortune to be merchants, some explanation of the drama known as bankruptcy is necessary if they are to comprehend how it constitutes the most monstrous legal farce in Paris and understand the ordinary rule to which César's case was to be so marked an exception:

A failure in business is a thrilling drama in three distinct acts. Act the first may be called The Agent; act the second, The Trustees; and act the third, The *Concordat*, or payment of composition. The spectacle is twofold, as is the case with plays performed on the stage; for there is the spectacular effect intended for the public, and the more or less invisible mechanism by which the effects are produced, and the same play if seen before and behind the scenes looks quite different from different points of view. In the wings stand the bankrupt and his attorney (one of the advocates who practice at the Tribunal of Commerce), and the trustees and agent and the registrar complete the list.

Nobody outside Paris knows what no Parisian can fail to know, that a registrar is the most extraordinary kind of magis-

trate which the freaks of civilization have devised. In the first place he is a judge who, at every moment of his official life, may go in fear that his own measure may be dealt to him again. Paris has even seen the president of her Tribunal of Commerce compelled to file his petition; and the ordinary judge, who is called upon to act as a registrar, is no venerable merchant retired from business, whose magistracy is a tribute to a stainless career, but the active senior partner of some great house, a man burdened with the responsibility of vast enterprises. It is a *sine qua non* that a judge who is bound to give decisions on the torrents of commercial disputes which pour incessantly upon the capital shall have as much or more business of his own than he can manage.

Thus the Tribunal of Commerce, which might have been a useful transition stage and half-way house between the trading community and the regions of the *noblesse*, is composed of busy merchants, who may one day be made to suffer for unpopular awards, and a Birotteau among them may find a du Tillet.

The judge or registrar, therefore, is of necessity a personage in whose presence a great deal is said to which perforce he lends an ear, thinking the while of his private concerns. He is very apt to leave public business in the hands of the trustees and the attorneys who practice at the Tribunal of Commerce, unless some odd and unusual case turns up; some instance of theft under curious circumstances, to draw from him the remark that either the creditor or the debtor must be a clever fellow. This personage set on high above the scene, like the portrait of a king in an audience-chamber, is to be seen of a morning from five to seven o'clock in his yard if he is a lumber merchant; in his store, if, like Birotteau, he is a perfumer; and again in the evening at dessert after dinner, but always and in any case terribly busy. For these reasons this functionary is usually dumb.

Let us do justice to the law; the registrar's hands are tied

by the hasty legislation which provided for these matters; and many a time he sanctions frauds which he is powerless to hinder, as will shortly be seen.

The agent, instead of being the creditor's man, may play into the debtor's hands. Each creditor hopes to swell his share and in some way to make better terms for himself with the bankrupt, whom every one suspects of a secret hoard. The agent can make something out of both sides, by dealing leniently with the bankrupt on the one hand, or, on the other, by securing something for the more influential creditors, and in this way can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Not unfrequently a crafty agent has annulled a judgment by buying out the creditors and releasing the merchant, who springs up again at a rebound like an india-rubber ball.

The agent turns to the best furnished crib; he will, if necessary, cover the largest creditors and let the debtor go bare, or he will sacrifice the creditors to the merchant's future, as suits him best. So the whole drama turns on the first act; and the agent, like the attorney of the Tribunal, is the utility-man in a piece in which neither will play unless he is sure of his fees beforehand. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, the agent is for the debtor.

At the time when this story took place, it was the practice of attorneys at the Tribunal of Commerce to go to the judge who was to act as registrar and nominate a man of their own, some one who knew something of the debtor's affairs and could manage to reconcile the interests of the many and of the one—the honorable trader who had fallen into misfortune. Of late years it has been the practice of shrewd judges to wait till this has been done so as to avoid the nominee, and to make an effort to appoint a man of passable integrity.

During this first act the creditors, genuine or presumed, present themselves to select the provisional trustees, an appointment which, as has been said, is practically final. In this electoral assembly every creditor has a voice, whether his

claim is for fifty sous or fifty thousand francs, and the votes are reckoned by count and not by weight. The names of the trustees are proposed at the meeting, packed by the debtor with sham creditors (the only ones who never fail to put in an appearance); and from the names thus sent in, the registrar, the powerless president, is *bound* to choose those who shall act. Naturally, therefore, the registrar takes the trustees from the debtor's hands, another abuse which turns this catastrophe into one of the most burlesque dramas sanctioned by a court of justice. The "honorable trader fallen into misfortune" is master of the situation, and proceeds to carry out a premeditated robbery with the law at his back. In Paris, as a rule, the petty tradesmen are blameless. Before a storekeeper files his schedule, the poor honest fellow has left no stone unturned; he has sold his wife's shawl and pawned his spoons and forks; and when he gives in at last, it is with empty hands, he is utterly ruined, and has not even money to pay the attorney, who troubles himself very little about his client.

The law demands that the *concordat*, which remits a part of the debt and restores the debtor to the management of his affairs, should be put to the vote and carried by a sufficient majority, with due regard to the amounts claimed by the voters. To secure the majority is a great feat which demands the most skillful diplomacy on the part of the debtor, his attorney, and the trustees amid the clash of conflicting interests. The ordinary commonplace stratagem consists in offering to such a body of the creditors as will represent the majority required by the law a premium to be paid over and above the dividend which the meeting of creditors is to consent to accept. For this gigantic swindle there is no remedy. Successive Tribunals of Commerce, familiar with it by dint of practice in non-official capacity and grown wise by experience, have decided of late that all claims are made void where there is a suspicion of fraud; thus it is to the debtor's interest to

complain of the "extortion," and the judges of the Tribunal hope in this way to raise the moral tone of proceedings in liquidation. But they will only succeed in making matters worse; creditors will exercise their ingenuity to invent still more rascally devices, which the judges will brand as registrars and profit by as merchants.

Another extremely popular expedient, which gave rise to the expression "serious and legitimate creditor," consists in creating creditors, much as du Tillet created a firm of bankers. By introducing a sufficient number of Claparons into the meeting, the debtor, in these diverse manifestations, receives a share of the spoils, and sensibly diminishes the dividends of the real creditors. This plan has a double advantage: The debtor obtains resources for the future, and at the same time secures the proper number of votes representing (to all appearance) a sufficient proportion of the claims upon the estate, the majority necessary for his discharge. These "gay bogus creditors" are like sham electors in the electoral college. What help has the "serious *bonâ-fide* creditor" against his "gay bogus" compeer? He can rid himself of him by attacking him! Very good. But if the "serious and *bonâ-fide*" creditor means to oust the intruder, he must leave his own business to take care of itself, and he must employ an attorney; and, as the said attorney makes little or nothing out of the case, he prefers to "conduct" bankruptcies, and does not take a bit of pettifogging business too seriously. Then, at the outset, before the "gay and bogus" one can be unearthed, a labyrinth of procedure must be entered upon, the bankrupt's books must be gone through to some remote epoch, and application must be made to the Court to require that the books of the pretended creditor shall be likewise produced; the improbability of the fiction must be set forth and clearly proved to the satisfaction of the judges of the Tribunal, and the serious creditor must come and go and plead and arouse interest in the indifferent. This Quixotic performance, more-

over, must be gone through afresh in each separate case; and each gay and bogus creditor, if fairly convicted of "gaiety," makes his bow to the Court with an "Excuse me, there is some mistake; I am very serious indeed." All this is done without prejudice to the rights of the debtor, who may appeal and bring Don Quixote into the Court-Royal. And in the meantime Don Quixote's own affairs go askew, and he too may be compelled to file his schedule.

Moral: Let the debtor choose his trustees, verify the claims, and arrange the amount of composition himself.

Given these conditions, who cannot imagine the underhand schemes, the tricks worthy of Sganarelle, stratagems that a Frontin might have devised, the lies that would do credit to a Mascarille, the empty wallets of a Scapin, and all the results of these two systems? Any bankruptcy since insolvency came into fashion would supply a writer with material sufficient to fill the fourteen volumes of "Clarissa Harlowe." A single example shall suffice:

The illustrious Gobseck, the master at whose feet the Palmas, Gigonnets, Werbrusts, Kellers, and Nucingens of Paris have sat, once found himself among the creditors of a bankrupt who had managed to swindle him, and whom, on that account, he proposed to handle roughly. Of this person he received bills to fall due *after the discharge* for a sum which (taken together with the dividends received at the time) should pay the amount owing to him (Gobseck) in full. Gobseck, in consequence, recommended that a final dividend of twenty-five per cent. be paid. Behold the creditors swindled for Gobseck's benefit! But the merchant had signed the illegal bills in the name of the insolvent firm; and when the time came, a dividend of twenty-five per cent. was all that he could be made to pay upon them, and Gobseck, the great Gobseck, received a bare fifty per cent. He always took off his hat with ironical respect when he met that debtor.

As all transactions which take place within ten days before

the time when a man files his schedule are open to question, certain prudent prospective bankrupts are careful to break ground early, and to approach some of their creditors, whose interest it is, not less than their own, to arrive at a prompt settlement. Then the more astute creditors will go in search of the simple or of the very busy, paint the failure in the darkest colors, and finally buy up their claims for half their value. When the estate is liquidated, these shrewd folk come by the dividend on their own share, and make fifty, thirty, or twenty-five per cent. on the liabilities which they have purchased, and in this way contrive to lose nothing.

After the failure is declared, the house in which a few bags of money yet remain from the pillage is more or less hermetically sealed. Happy the merchant who can effect an entrance by the window, the roof, the cellar, or a hole in the wall, and secure a bag to swell his share! When things have come to this pass, this Beresina, where the cry of "Each for himself" has been raised, it is hard to say what is legal or illegal, true or false, honest or dishonest. A creditor is thought a clever fellow if he "covers himself;" that is to say, if he secures himself at the expense of the rest. All France once rang with discussion of a prodigious failure, which took place in a certain city where there was a Court-Royal; the magistrates therein being all personally interested in the case arrayed their shoulders in waterproof cloaks so heavy that the mantle of justice was worn into holes, on which grounds it was necessary to transfer the affair into another court. There was no registrar, no agent, no final judgment possible in the bankrupt's own district.

In Paris these commercial quicksands are so thoroughly well appreciated that every merchant, however much time he may have on his hands, accepts the loss as an uninsured accident; and, unless he is involved for some very large sum, passes the matter to the wrong side of his profit and loss account. He is not so foolish as to waste time over wasted money; he pre-

fers to keep his own pot boiling. As for the little trader, hard put to it to pay his monthly accounts, and tied to the narrow round of his own business, tedious law proceedings, involving a heavy initial outlay, scare him; he gives up the attempt to see through the matter, follows the example of the great merchant, and makes up his mind to his loss. Wholesale merchants do not file their schedule in these days; they liquidate by private arrangement; their creditors take what is offered them, and give a receipt in full; a plan which saves publicity, and the delays of the law, and solicitors' fees, and depreciation of stock consequent on a sudden realization. It is a common belief that it pays better to have a private arrangement than to force the estate into bankruptcy, so private arrangements are more frequent than failures in Paris.

The second act of the drama is intended to prove that a trustee is incorruptible; that there is not the slightest attempt at collusion between them and the debtor. The audience, who have most of them been at some time cast for the part of trustees themselves, know that a trustee is another name for a creditor whose claims are "covered." He listens, and believes as much as he pleases, till, after three months spent in investigating liabilities and assets, the day comes when composition is offered and accepted. Then the provisional trustees read a little report for the assembled creditors. The following is a general formula:

"GENTLEMEN:—The total amount owing to us was one million. We have dismantled our man like a stranded frigate. The sale of old iron, timber, and copper has brought in three hundred thousand francs, the assets therefore amount to thirty per cent. of the liabilities. In our joy at finding this sum, when our debtor might have left us a bare hundred thousand francs, we proclaim him to be an Aristides. We vote him crowns and a premium by way of encouragement! We propose to leave him his assets, and to give him ten or a dozen

years in which to pay us the dividend of fifty per cent., which he condescends to promise us. Here is the *concordat*, walk up to the desk and put your names to it!"

At these words the happy creditors fall on each other's necks and congratulate one another. When the *concordat* has been ratified by the Tribunal the merchant's assets are put at his disposition, and he begins business again as if nothing had happened. He is at liberty to fail once more over the payment of the promised dividends—a sort of great-grandchild of a failure, which not seldom appears like an infant borne by a mother nine months after she had married her daughter.

If the *concordat* is not accepted, the creditors forthwith make a final appointment of trustees. They resort to extreme measures, and band themselves together to exploit the debtor's property and business; they lay their hands on everything he has or may have, his reversionary rights in the property of father and mother, uncles and aunts, and the like. This is a desperate remedy found by a "union of the creditors."

If a man fails in business, therefore, there are two ways open to him: by the first method, he takes things into his own hands, and means to recover himself; in the second, having fallen into the water, he is content to go to the bottom. Pillerault knew the difference well. He was of Ragon's opinion, that it was as hard to issue from the first experience with clean hands as to emerge from the second a wealthy man. He counseled surrender at discretion, and betook himself to the most upright attorney on 'Change, asking him to conduct the liquidation and to put the proceeds at the disposition of the creditors. The law requires that the creditors should make an allowance for the support of the debtor and his family while the drama is in progress. Pillerault gave notice to the registrar that he himself would maintain his niece and nephew.

Du Tillet had planned everything with a view to prolong-

ing the agony of his old master's failure, and in the following manner. Time is so valuable in Paris, that, though there are usually two trustees appointed, one only acts in the case; the other is nominated for form's sake; he approves the proceedings, like the second notary in a notarial deed; and the active trustee as often as not leaves the work to the attorney employed by the bankrupt. By these means a failure of the first kind is conducted so vigorously that everything is patched up, fixed, settled, and arranged during the minimum time required by the legal procedure. In a hundred days the registrar might repeat the cold-blooded epigram of the minister who announced that "Order reigns in Warsaw."

Du Tillet meant to make an end of César, commercially speaking. So the names of the trustees appointed through his influence had an ominous sound for Pillerault. M. Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, the principal creditor, was to do nothing. Molineux, the fidgety little old person who had lost nothing, was to do everything. Du Tillet had thrown this noble corpse of a business to the little jackal to worry before he devoured it.

Little Molineux went home after the meeting of creditors, at which the trustees were appointed, "honored" (so he put it) "by the suffrages of his fellow-citizens," and as happy in the prospect of domineering over Birotteau as an urchin who has an insect to torment. The owner of house-property, being a stickler for the law, bought a copy of the "Code of Commerce," and asked du Tillet to give him the benefit of his lights. Luckily, Joseph Lebas, forewarned by Pillerault, had, at the outset, obtained a sagacious and benevolent registrar, and Gobenheim-Keller (on whom du Tillet had fixed his choice) was replaced by M. Camusot, an assistant judge, and Pillerault's landlord, a Liberal, and a rich silk merchant, spoken of as an honorable man.

One of the most dreadful scenes in César's life was his enforced conference with little Molineux; the creature whom

he had looked upon as such a nullity had now, by a legal fiction, become César Birotteau. There was no help for it; so, accompanied by his uncle, he climbed the six flights of stairs in the Cour Batave, reached the old man's dismal room, and confronted his guardian, his *quasi* judge, the man who represented the body of his creditors.

"What is the matter?" Pillerault asked on the stairs, hearing a groan from César.

"Oh! uncle, you do not know what kind of a man this Molineux is."

"I have seen him at the Café David these fifteen years; he plays a game of dominoes there of an evening now and then. That is why I came with you."

Molineux was prodigiously civil to Pillerault, and his manner toward the bankrupt was contemptuously patronizing. The little old man had thought out his course, studied his behavior down to the minutest details, and his ideas were ready prepared.

"What information do you want?" asked Pillerault. "None of the claims are disputed."

"Oh! the claims are all in order," said little Molineux; "they are all verified. The creditors are serious and *bonâ-fide!* But there's the law, sir; there's the law! The bankrupt's expenditure is out of proportion to his means. It appears that the ball——"

"At which you were an invited guest," put in the adroit Pillerault.

"Cost nearly sixty thousand francs! At any rate, that amount was spent on the occasion, and the debtor's capital at the time only amounted to a hundred and some odd thousand francs! There is warrant sufficient for bringing the matter before a registrar-extraordinary, as a case of bankruptcy caused by serious mismanagement."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Pillerault, who noticed Birotteau's despondency at those words.

"Sir, the said Birotteau was a municipal officer, that makes a difference——"

"You did not send for us, I suppose, to tell us that the case was to be transferred to a criminal court?" said Pillerault. "The whole Café David would laugh this evening at your conduct."

The little old man seemed to stand in some awe of the opinion of the Café David; he gave Pillerault a scared look. He had reckoned upon dealing with Birotteau alone, and had promised himself that he would pose as sovereign lord and Jupiter. He had meant to strike terror into Birotteau's soul by the thunderbolts of a formal indictment, to brandish the axe above his head, to enjoy the spectacle of his anguish and alarm, and then to relent at the prayer of his victim, and send him away with eternal gratitude in his soul. But, instead of the insect, he was confronted with this business-like old sphinx.

"There is nothing whatever to laugh at, sir!" said he.

"I beg your pardon," returned Pillerault. "You are consulting Monsieur Claparon pretty freely; you are neglecting the interests of the other creditors to obtain a decision that you have preferential claims. Now I, as a creditor, can intervene. The registrar is there."

"Sir," said Molineux, "I am incorruptible."

"I know you are," said Pillerault; "you are only getting yourself out of the scrape, as the saying is. You are shrewd; you have done as you did in the case of that tenant of yours——"

"Oh! sir, my lawsuit in the matter of the Rue Montorgueil is not decided yet!" cried the trustee, slipping back into the landlord at the word, just as the cat who became a woman pounced upon the mouse. "A new issue, as they say, has been raised. It is not a sub-tenancy; he holds direct, and the scamp says now that as he paid his rent a year in advance. and there is only a year to run" (at this point Pillerault gave

César a glance which recommended the closest attention to what should follow), "and the year's rent being prepaid, he might clear his furniture out of the premises. So there is a new lawsuit. As a matter of fact, I ought to look after my guarantees until I am paid in full; there may be repairs for which the tenant ought to pay."

"But you cannot distrain except for rent," remarked Pillerault.

"And accessories!" cried Molineux, attacked in the centre. "The article in the Code is interpreted by the light of decisions; there are precedents. The law, however, certainly wants mending in this respect. At this moment I am drafting a petition to his lordship the keeper of the seals concerning the hiatus. It would become the Government to consider the interests of owners of property. The State depends upon us, for we bear the brunt of the taxes."

"You are well qualified to enlighten the Government," said Pillerault; "but on what point in this business of ours can we throw any light for you?"

"I want to know," said Molineux with imperious emphasis, "whether Monsieur Birotteau has received any money from Monsieur Popinot."

"No, sir," answered Birotteau. A discussion followed as to Birotteau's interest in the firm of Popinot, in the course of which it was decided that Popinot had a right to demand the repayment of his advances in full without putting in his claim under the bankruptcy as one of Birotteau's creditors for the half of the expenses of starting his business, which Birotteau ought to have paid. Gradually, under Pillerault's handling, Molineux became more and more civil, a symptom which proved that he set no little store on the opinion of the frequenters of the Café David. Before the interview ended he was condoling with Birotteau, and asked him no less than Pillerault to share his humble dinner. If the ex-perfumer had gone by himself, he would perhaps have exasperated

Molineux, and brought rancor into the business; and now, as at some other times, old Pillerault played the part of guardian angel.

One horrible form of torture the law inflicts upon bankrupts: they are bound to appear in person with the provisional trustees and the registrar at the meeting of creditors which decides their fate. For a man who can rise above it, as for the merchant who is seeking his revenge, the dismal ceremony is not very formidable; but for any one like César the whole thing is an agony only paralleled by the last day in the condemned cell. Pillerault did all in his power to make that day endurable to his nephew.

Molineux's proceedings, sanctioned by the bankrupt, had been on this wise: The lawsuit concerning the mortgage on the property in the Faubourg du Temple had been gained in the Court of Appeal. The trustees decided to sell the land, and César made no objections. Du Tillet, knowing that the Government meant to construct a canal to open communication between Saint-Denis and the upper Seine, and that the canal would pass through the Faubourg du Temple, bought César's property for seventy thousand francs. César's rights in the Madeleine building land were abandoned to M. Claparon, on condition that he on his side should make no demand for half the registration fees, which César should have paid on the completion of the contract; it was arranged that Claparon should take over the land and pay for it, and receive the dividend in the bankruptcy which was due to the vendors.

The perfumer's interest in the firm of Popinot & Company was sold to the said Popinot for forty-eight thousand francs. Célestin Crevel bought the business as a going concern for fifty-seven thousand francs, together with the lease of the premises, the stock, the fittings, the proprietary rights in the Pâte des Sultanes and Carminative Toilet Lotion, a twelve years' lease of the factory and the plant being included in the sale.

The liquid assets reached a total of one hundred and ninety-five thousand francs, to which the trustees added seventy thousand francs from the liquidation of "that unlucky fellow Roguin." Two hundred and sixty-five thousand francs in all. The liabilities amounted to about four hundred and forty thousand francs, so that there would be a dividend of more than fifty per cent.

A liquidation is something like a chemical process, from which the clever insolvent merchant endeavors to emerge as a saturated solution. Birotteau, distilled entirely in this retort, yielded a result which infuriated du Tillet. Du Tillet thought that there would be a dishonoring bankruptcy, and behold a liquidation highly creditable to his man. He cared very little about the pecuniary gain, for he would have the building land by the Madeleine without opening his purse; he wished to see the poor merchant disgraced, ruined, and humbled in the dust. The meeting of creditors would doubtless carry out the perfumer in triumph on their shoulders.

As Birotteau's courage returned, his uncle, like a wise physician, gradually told him the details of the proceedings in bankruptcy. These rigorous measures were so many heavy blows. A merchant cannot but feel depressed when the things on which he has spent so much money and so much thought are sold for so little. He was petrified with astonishment at the tidings which Pillerault brought.

"Fifty-seven thousand francs for the Queen of Roses! Why, the stock is worth ten thousand francs! We spent forty thousand francs on the rooms and the fittings; the plant, the moulds and boilers over at the factory cost thirty thousand francs! Why, if the things are sold for half their value, there is the worth of ten thousand francs in the store, and the Pâte des Sultanes and the Lotion are as good as a farm!"

Poor ruined César's jeremiads did not alarm Pillerault very much. The old merchant took them much as a

horse takes a shower of rain; but when he came to talk of the meeting of creditors, César's gloomy silence frightened him. Those who understand the weakness and vanity of human nature in every social sphere will understand that for an ex-judge to return as a bankrupt to the Palais where he had sat was a ghastly form of torture. He must receive his enemies in the very place where he had been so often thanked for his services; he, Birotteau, whose views as to bankruptcy were so well known in Paris; he who had said, "A man who files his schedule is an honest man still, but by the time he comes out of a meeting of creditors he is a rogue." His uncle watched for favorable opportunities, and tried to accustom him to the idea of appearing before his creditors assembled, as the law requires. This condition was killing Birotteau. His dumb resignation made a deep impression on Pillerault, who, through the thin partition wall, used to hear him cry at night, "Never! never! I will die sooner."

Pillerault, so strong himself by reason of his simple life, understood weakness. He made up his mind to spare Birotteau the anguish to which his nephew might succumb, the dreadful and inevitable meeting with his creditors! The law is precise, positive, and unflinching in this respect; the debtor who refuses to appear is liable on these grounds alone to have his case transferred out of the commercial into the criminal court. But if the law compels the appearance of the debtor, it exercises no such constraint upon the creditors.

A meeting of creditors is a mere formality except in certain cases; when, for example, a rogue is to be ousted, or the creditors unite to refuse the dividend offered, or cannot agree among themselves because some of their number are privileged to the prejudice of the rest, or the dividend offered is outrageously small, and the bankrupt is doubtful of obtaining a majority to carry the resolution. But when the estate has been honestly liquidated, or when a rascally debtor has squared everybody, the meeting is only a matter of form. So

Pillerault went round to the creditors one after another and asked each to empower his attorney to represent him on that occasion. Every creditor, du Tillet excepted, was sorry for Birotteau now that he had been brought low. All of them knew how he had behaved, how well his books had been kept, and how straightforward he had been in the matter. They were well pleased to find not one "gay" creditor among their number. Molineux, as agent in the first place, and afterward as trustee, had found all that the poor man possessed, down to the print of "Hero and Leander" which Popinot had given him. Birotteau had not taken away such small matters as his gold-buckles, his pin, and the two watches, which even an honest man might not have scrupled to keep. This touching obedience to the law made a great sensation in commercial circles. Birotteau's enemies represented these things as conclusive signs of the man's stupidity; but sensible people saw them in their true light, as a magnificent excess of honesty. In two months a change had been brought about in opinion on 'Change. The most indifferent admitted that this failure was one of the greatest curiosities of commerce ever heard of. So when the creditors knew that they were to receive sixty per cent., they agreed to do all that Pillerault asked of them. There are but few attorneys practicing at the Tribunal; so several of the creditors deputed the same man to represent them, and the whole formidable assemblage was reduced to three attorneys, Ragon, the two trustees, and the registrar.

"César, you can go without fear to your meeting to-day; you will find nobody there," Pillerault said on the morning of that memorable day.

M. Ragon wished to go with his debtor. At the sound of the thin elderly voice of the previous owner of the Queen of Roses, all the color left his successor's face; but the kind little old man held out his arms, and Birotteau went to him like a child to his father, and both shed tears. This indulgent

goodness put fresh heart into César, and he followed his uncle to the cab.

Punctually at half-past three they arrived in the Clôitre Saint-Merri, where the Tribunal of Commerce then held its sessions. The Salle des Faillites was deserted. The day and the hour had been fixed to that end with the approbation of the trustees and the registrar. The attorneys were there on behalf of their clients; there was nothing to fill César's soul with dread; and yet the poor man could not enter M. Camusot's room (which had once been his) without deep emotion, and he shuddered as he went through the Salle des Faillites.

"It is cold," said M. Camusot, turning to Birotteau; "these gentlemen will not be sorry to stay here instead of being frozen in the Salle." (He would not say the Salle des Faillites.*) "Seat yourselves, gentlemen."

Every one sat down; the registrar put César, still confused, into his own armchair. Then trustees and attorneys signed their names.

"In consideration of the abandonment of your estate," said Camusot, again addressing Birotteau, "your creditors unanimously agree to forego the remainder of their claims; your *concordat* is couched in language which may soften your regrets; your attorney will have it confirmed by the Tribunal at once. So you are discharged. All the judges of the Tribunal have felt sorry that you should be placed in such a position, dear Monsieur Birotteau, without being surprised by your courage," Camusot went on, taking Birotteau's hands, "and there is no one but appreciates your integrity. Through your disasters you have shown yourself worthy of the position which you held here. I have been in business these twenty years, and this is the second time that I have seen a merchant rise in public esteem 'after his failure.'"

Birotteau grasped the registrar's hand and squeezed it. There were tears in his eyes. Camusot asked him what he

* Bankrupts' Hall.

meant to do, and Birotteau answered that he was going to work, and that he intended to pay his creditors in full.

"If you should be in want of a few thousand francs to carry out your noble design, you will always find them if you come to me," said Camusot; "I would give them with great pleasure to see a thing not often seen in Paris."

Pillerault, Ragon, and Birotteau left the Tribunal.

"Well, was it so bad after all?" said Pillerault, when they stood outside.

"I can see your hand in it, uncle," said César, deeply touched.

"And now that you are on your feet again, come and see my nephew," said Ragon; "it is only a step to the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

It was with a cruel pang that César looked up and saw Constance sitting at her desk in a room on the low, dark floor above the store; dark, for a signboard outside, on which the name "A. Popinot" was painted, cut off one-third of the light from the window.

"Here is one of Alexander's lieutenants," said Birotteau, pointing to the sign with the forced mirth of misfortune.

This constrained gaiety, the naïve expression of Birotteau's old belief in his superior talents, made Ragon shudder, despite his seventy years. But César's cheerfulness broke down when his wife brought in letters for Popinot to sign, and his face turned white in spite of himself.

"Good-evening, dear," she said, smiling at him.

"I need not ask whether you are comfortable here," César said, and he looked at Popinot.

"I might be in my own son's house," she said, and her husband was struck by the tender expression which crossed her face.

Birotteau embraced Popinot, saying, "I have just lost for ever the right to call you my son."

"Let us hope," said Popinot. "*Your* Oil is going well,

thanks to our efforts in the newspapers, and thanks to Gaudissart, who has been all over and flooded France with placards and prospectuses. He is having prospectuses in German printed at Strasbourg, and is just about to descend on Germany like an invasion. We have orders for three thousand gross."

"Three thousand gross!" echoed César.

"And I have bought some land in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, not badly; a factory is to be built there. I shall keep on at the other place in the Faubourg du Temple."

"With a little help, wife," Birotteau said in Constance's ear, "we shall pull through."

From that memorable day César and his wife and daughter understood one another. Poor clerk, as he was, he had set himself a task which, if not impossible, was gigantic; he would pay his creditors in full! The three, united by a common bond of fierce independence, grew miserly and denied themselves everything; every centime was consecrated to this end. Césarine, with one object in her mind, threw herself into her work with a young girl's devotion. She spent her nights in devising schemes for increasing the prosperity of the house; she invented designs for materials, and brought her inborn business faculties into play. Her employers were obliged to check her ardor for work, and rewarded her with presents, but she declined the ornaments and trinkets which they offered; it was money that she preferred. Every month she took her salary, her little earnings, to her Uncle Pillerault, and César and Mme. Birotteau did the same. All three of them recognized their lack of ability, and shrank from assuming the responsible task of investing their savings. So the uncle went into business again, and studied the money market. At a later time it was known that Jules Desmarets and Joseph Lebas had helped him with their counsel; both had zealously looked for safe investments.

Birotteau, living in his uncle's house, did not even dare to

ask any questions about the uses to which the family savings were put. He went through the streets with a bent head, shrinking from all eyes, downcast, nervous, blind to all that passed. It vexed him that he must wear fine cloth.

"At any rate, I am not eating my creditors' bread," he said, with an angelic glance at the kind old man. "Your bread is sweet" (he went on), "although you give it me out of pity, when I think that, thanks to this sacred charity, I am not robbing my creditors of my earnings."

The merchants who met the Birotteau of those days could not see a trace of the Birotteau whom they used to know. Vast thoughts were awakened in indifferent beholders at sight of that face so dark with the blackest misery, of the man who had never been thoughtful so bowed down beneath the weight of a thought; it was a revelation of the depths, in that this being, dwelling on so ordinary a human level, could have had so far to fall. To the man who would fain be wiped out comes no extinction. Shallow natures who lack a conscience, and are incapable of much feeling, can never furnish forth the tragedy of man and fate. Religion alone sets its peculiar seal on those who have sounded these depths; they believe in a future and in a Providence; a certain light shines in them, a look of holy resignation, blended with hope, which touches those who behold it; they know all that they have lost, like the exiled angel weeping at the gates of heaven. A bankrupt cannot show his face on 'Change; and César, thrust out from the society of honest men, was like the angel sighing for pardon.

For fourteen months César refused all amusements; his mind was full of religious thoughts, inspired by his fall. Sure though he was of the Ragons' friendship, it was impossible to induce him to dine with them; nor would he visit the Lebas, nor the Matifats, the Protez and Chiffrevilles, nor even M. Vauquelin, though all were anxious to show their admiration for César's behavior. He would rather be alone in his own

room, where he could not meet the eyes of any one to whom he owed money; and the most cordial kindness on the part of his friends recalled him to a sense of the bitterness of his position.

Constance and Césarine went nowhere. On Sundays and holidays, the only times when they were free, the two women went first to mass, and then home with César after the service. Pillerault used to ask the Abbé Loraux to come—the Abbé Loraux who had sustained César in his trouble—and they made a family party. The old hardware merchant could not but approve his nephew's scruples, his own sense of commercial honor was too keen; and therefore his mind was bent upon increasing the number of people whom the bankrupt might look in the face with a clear brow.

In May, 1821, the efforts of the family thus struggling with adversity were rewarded by a holiday, contrived by the arbiter of their destinies. The first Sunday in that month was the anniversary of the betrothal of César and Constance. Pillerault and the Ragons had taken a little house in the country at Sceaux, and the old hardware dealer wanted to make a festival of the house-warming.

On the Saturday evening he spoke to his nephew. "We are going into the country to-morrow, César," he said, "and you must come, too."

César, who wrote a beautiful hand, copied documents for Derville and several other lawyers in the evenings, and on Sundays (with a dispensation from the curé) he worked like a negro.

"No," he answered; "Monsieur Derville is waiting for an account of a guardianship."

"Your wife and daughter deserve a holiday, and there will be no one but our friends—the Abbé Loraux, the Ragons, and Popinot and his uncle. Beside, I want you to come."

César and his wife, carried away by the daily round of their busy lives, had never gone back to Sceaux, though from

time to time they both had wished to see the garden again, and the lime-tree beneath which César had almost swooned with joy, in the days when he was still an assistant at the Queen of Roses. To-day, when Popinot drove them, and Birotteau sat with Constance and their daughter, his wife's eyes turned to his from time to time, but the look of intelligence in them drew no answering smile from his lips. She whispered a few words in his ear, but a shake of the head was the only response. The sweet expressions of tenderness, unalterable, but now forced somewhat, brought no light into César's eyes; his face grew gloomier, the tears which he had kept back began to fill his eyes. Twenty years ago he had been along this very road, when he was young and prosperous and full of hope, the lover of a girl as lovely as Césarine, who was with them now. Then he had dreamed of happiness to come; to-day he saw his noble child's face, pale with long hours of work, and his brave wife, of whose great beauty there remained such traces as are left to a beautiful city after the lava flood has poured over it. Of all that had been, love alone was left. César's attitude repressed the joy in the girl's heart and in Anselme, the two who now represented the lovers of that bygone day.

"Be happy, children; you deserve to be happy," said the poor father, in heartrending tones. "You can love each other with no after-thoughts," added he; and as he spoke he took both his wife's hands in his and kissed them with a reverent, admiring affection which touched her more than the brightest cheerfulness. Pillerault, the Ragons, the Abbé Loraux, and Popinot the elder were all waiting for them at the house; there was an understanding among those five kindly souls, and their manner, and looks, and words put César at his ease, for it went to their hearts to see him always as if on the morrow of his failure.

"Take a walk in the Bois d'Aulnay," said Pillerault, putting César's hand into that of his wife's. "Go and

take Anselme and Césarine with you, and come back again at four o'clock."

"Poor things, we are in the way," said Mme. Ragon, touched by her debtor's unfeigned misery; "he will be very happy before long."

"It is a repentance without the sin," said the Abbé Loraux.

"He could only have grown great through misfortune," said the judge.

The power of forgetting is the great secret of strong and creative natures; they forget after the manner of nature, who knows nothing of a past; with every hour she begins afresh the constant mysterious workings of fertility. But weak natures, like Birotteau, take their sorrows into their lives instead of transmuting them into the axioms of experience; and, steeping themselves in their troubles, wear themselves out by reverting daily to the old unhappiness.

When the two couples had found the footpath which leads to the Bois d'Aulnay, set like a crown on one of the loveliest of the low hills about Paris; when the Vallée-aux-Loups lay below them in its enchanting beauty, the bright day, the charm of the view, the fresh green leaves about them, and delicious memories of that fairest day of their youth, relaxed the chords which grief had strung to resonance in César's soul; he held his wife's arm tightly against his beating heart; his eyes were glazed no longer, a glad light shone in them.

"At last I see you again, my dear César," Constance said. "It seems to me that we are behaving well enough to allow ourselves a little pleasure from time to time."

"How can I?" poor Birotteau answered. "Oh! Constance, your love is the one good left to me. I have lost everything, even the confidence that I used to have in myself. I have no heart left in me; I want to live long enough to pay my dues on earth before I die, and that is all. You, dear, who have been wisdom and prudence for me, who saw things

clearly, you who are not to blame, may be glad. Among us three, I am the only guilty one. Eighteen months ago, at that unlucky ball, I saw this Constance of mine, the only woman whom I have loved, more beautiful perhaps than the young girl with whom I wandered along this path twenty years ago, as our children are wandering together now. In less than two years I have blighted that beauty, my pride, and I had a right to be proud of it. I love you more as I know you better. Oh! dearest!" and his tone gave the word an eloquence that went to his wife's heart, "if only I might hear you scold me, instead of soothing my distress."

"I did not think it possible," she said, "that a woman could love her husband more after twenty years of life together."

For a moment César forgot all his troubles at the words that brought such a wealth of happiness to a heart like his. It was with something like joy in his soul that he went toward *their* tree, which by some chance had not been cut down. Husband and wife sat down beneath it, and watched Anselme and Césarine, who walked to and fro on the same plot of grass, unconscious of their movements, fancying perhaps that they were still walking on and on.

"Mademoiselle," Anselme was saying, "do you think me so base and so greedy as to take advantage of the fact that I own your father's interest in the Cephalic Oil? I have carefully set aside his share of the profits; I am keeping them for him. I am adding interest to the money; if there are any doubtful debts, I pass them to my own account. We can only belong to each other when your father has been rehabilitated; I am trying with all the strength that love gives me to bring that day soon."

He had carefully kept his secret from Césarine's mother; but the simplest lover is always anxious to be great in his love's eyes.

"And will it come soon?" she asked.

"Very soon," said Popinot.

The tone in which the answer was given was so penetrating that the innocent and pure-hearted girl held up her forehead for her lover's kiss, fervent and respectful, for Césarine's noble nature had spoken so plainly in the impulse.

"Everything is going well, papa," she said, with the air of one who knows a great deal. "Be nice, and talk, and don't look so sad any longer."

When these four people, so closely bound together, returned to Pillerault's new house, César, unobservant though he was, felt from the Ragons' altered manner that something was impending. Mme. Ragon was peculiarly gracious; her look and tone said plainly to César, "We are paid."

After dinner the notary of Sceaux appeared. Pillerault asked him to be seated, and glanced at Birotteau, who began to suspect some surprise, though he did not imagine how great it would be. Pillerault began—

"Your savings for eighteen months, nephew, and those of your wife and daughter amount to twenty thousand francs. I received thirty thousand francs in the shape of dividend, so we have fifty thousand francs to divide among your creditors. Monsieur Ragon has had thirty thousand francs as dividend; so this gentleman, who is the notary of Sceaux, is about to hand you a receipt in full for principal and interest, paid to your friends. The rest of the money is with Crottat for Lourdois, Madame Madou, the builder, and the carpenter, and the more pressing of your creditors. Next year we shall see. One can go a long way with time and patience."

Birotteau's joy cannot be described; he embraced his uncle, and shed tears.

"Let him wear his cross to-day," said Ragon, addressing the Abbé Loraux, and the confessor fastened the red ribbon to César's button-hole. A score of times that evening he looked at himself in the mirrors on the walls of the sitting-room with a delight which people who believe themselves to

be superior would laugh at; but these good-hearted citizens saw nothing unnatural in it. The next day Birotteau went to see Mme. Madou.

"Oh! is that you!" she cried; "I did not know you, old man, you have grown so gray. Still, the like of you don't come to grief; there are places under Government for you. I myself am working as hard as a poodle that turns a spit, and deserves to be christened."

"But, madame——"

"Oh, I'm not blaming you," she said; "you had your discharge."

"I have come to tell you that I will pay you the balance to-day, at Maître Crottat's office, and interest also——"

"Really?"

"You must be there at half-past eleven."

"There's honesty for you! good measure, and thirteen to the dozen," cried she, in outspoken admiration. "Stop, sir, I do a good trade with that red-haired youngster of yours; he is a nice young fellow; he lets me make my profit without haggling over the price, so as to make up to me for the loss. Well, then, I will give you the receipt; keep your money, poor old soul! La Madou fires up like tinder, she hollers out, but she has something here," and she tapped the most ample cushion of live flesh ever known in the Great Market.

"Never!" said Birotteau, "the law is explicit; I mean to pay you in full."

"Then there is no need to keep on begging and praying of me. And to-morrow at the Market I will sound your praises; they shall all know about you. Oh! it is a rare joke!"

The worthy man went through the same scene again with the house-painter, Crottat's father-in-law, but with some variations. It was raining. César left his umbrella in a corner by the door, and the well-to-do house-painter, sitting at breakfast with his wife in a handsomely furnished room, saw

the stream of water trickle across the floor, and was not too considerate.

"Halloo, poor old Birotteau, what do you want?" he asked, in the hard tone which people use to a tiresome beggar.

"Has not your son-in-law asked you, sir——"

"What?" Lourdois broke in impatiently. Some request was to follow, he thought.

"To go to his office this morning at half-past eleven, to give me a receipt in full for the balance of your claim?"

"Oh! that is another thing! Just sit you down, Monsieur Birotteau, and take a bite with us——"

"Do us the honor of breakfasting with us," said Mme. Lourdois.

"Doing pretty well?" asked her burly spouse.

"No, sir. I have had to lunch off a roll in my office to get some money together, but I hope in time to repair the wrong done to my neighbors."

"Really, you are a man of honor," remarked the house-painter, as he swallowed a mouthful of bread and butter and Strasbourg pie.

"And what is Madame Birotteau doing?" asked Mme. Lourdois.

"She is keeping the books in Monsieur Anselme Popinot's counting-house."

"Poor things!" said Mme. Lourdois, in a low voice.

"If you should want me, come and see me, my dear Monsieur Birotteau," began Lourdois; "I might be of use——"

"I want you at eleven o'clock, sir," said Birotteau, and with that he went.

This first result gave Birotteau fresh courage, but it did not give him peace of mind. The desire to redeem his character perturbed him beyond all measure. He completely lost the bloom which used to appear in his face, his eyes grew dull, his cheeks hollow. Old acquaintances who met him at eight o'clock in the morning, or after four in the afternoon on his

way to and from the Rue de l'Oratoire, saw a pale-faced, nervous, white-haired man, wearing the same overcoat which he had had at the time of the bankruptcy (for he was as careful of it as a poor sub-lieutenant who economizes his uniform). Sometimes they would stop him in spite of himself, for he was quick-sighted, slinking home, keeping close to the wall like a thief.

"People know how you have behaved, my friend," they would say. "Everybody is sorry to see how hardly you live, you and your wife and daughter."

"Take a little more time about it," others would suggest. "A wound in the purse is not mortal."

"No, but a wound in the soul is deadly indeed," the poor feeble César said one day in answer to Matifat.

At the beginning of the year 1823 the Canal Saint-Martin was decided upon, and land in the Faubourg du Temple fetched fabulous prices. The canal would actually pass through the property once César's, now du Tillet's. The company who had purchased the concessions were prepared to pay du Tillet an exorbitant sum for the land if he would put them in possession within a given time, and Popinot's lease was the one obstacle in the way. So du Tillet went to see the druggist in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants.

If Popinot himself regarded du Tillet with indifference, as Césarine's lover he felt an instinctive hatred of the man. He knew nothing of the theft, nor of the disgraceful machinations of the lucky banker, but a voice within him said, "This is a thief who goes unpunished." Popinot had not had the slightest transaction with du Tillet, whose presence was hateful to him, and particularly hateful at that moment when he beheld du Tillet enriched with the spoils of his employer's property, for the building land at the Madeleine was beginning to command prices which presaged the exorbitant sums which were asked for lots in 1827. So when the banker explained the reason

of his visit, Popinot looked at him with concentrated indignation.

"I do not mean to refuse outright to surrender my lease, but I must have sixty thousand francs for it, and I will not bate a centime."

"Sixty thousand francs!" cried du Tillet, making as though he would go.

"The lease has fifteen years to run, and it will take another three thousand francs per annum to replace the factory. So, sixty thousand francs, or we will say no more about it," said Popinot, turning into the store, whither du Tillet followed him.

The discussion waxed warm, when Mme. Birotteau, hearing her husband's name pronounced, came downstairs and saw du Tillet for the first time since the famous ball. He, on his side, could not avoid making a startled gesture at the sight of the change wrought in her face—he was frightened at his work and lowered his eyes.

"This gentleman is receiving three hundred thousand francs for *your* land," said Popinot, addressing Mme. César, "and he declines to pay *us* sixty thousand francs by way of indemnity for *our* lease——"

"Three thousand francs per annum," said du Tillet, laying stress on the words.

"*Three thousand francs!*" Madame César repeated the words quietly and significantly.

Du Tillet turned pale; Popinot looked at Mme. Birotteau. There was a pause and a deep silence, which made the scene still more inexplicable to Anselme.

"Sign your surrender," said du Tillet; "I have had the document drafted by Crottat," and he drew a stamped agreement from a side-pocket. "I will give you a draft on the bank for sixty thousand francs."

Popinot stared at Mme. César with great and unfeigned astonishment; he thought that he was dreaming. While du

Tillet was making out his draft at a desk, Mme. César vanished upstairs again. The druggist and the banker exchanged papers, and du Tillet went out with a very frigid bow to Popinot.

"At last!" cried Popinot. "Only a few months now, and I shall have my Césarine, thanks to this queer business," and he watched du Tillet turn into the Rue des Lombards, where his cab was waiting for him. "My dear little wife shall not wear herself to death at her work. What! was a look from Madame César enough? What is there between her and that brigand? It is a very extraordinary thing."

Popinot sent the draft to be cashed at the bank and went upstairs to speak to Mme. Birotteau; but she was not in the counting-house, doubtless she had gone to her room. Anselme and Constance lived like a mother-in-law and son-in-law when these are on good terms with each other, so he went to Constance's room in all the haste natural in a lover who sees happiness within his grasp.

Great was his astonishment to find his mother-in-law (whom he surprised by springing into the room) reading a letter from du Tillet, for Anselme recognized the handwriting at once. The sight of a lighted candle and black phantom scraps of burnt paper on the floor sent a shudder through Popinot, whose long-sighted eyes had involuntarily read the words with which the letter began, "I adore you! You know it, angel of my life, and why——"

"What hold have you on du Tillet to make him conclude such a bargain as this?" he asked, with the jerky laugh of repressed suspicion.

"Let us not talk of it," she said, and he saw that she was painfully agitated.

"Yes," answered Popinot, quite taken aback, "we must talk of the end of your troubles." Anselme swung round on his heels and drummed on the window-pane, staring out into the yard. "Very well," said he to himself, "and suppose

that she loved du Tillet, is that any reason why I should not behave like a man of honor?"

"What is it, my boy?" the poor woman asked.

"The net profits on the Cephalic Oil amount to two hundred and forty-two thousand francs, and the half of two hundred and forty-two is one hundred and twenty-one," said Popinot abruptly. "If I deduct from that sum the forty-eight thousand francs already paid to Monsieur Birotteau, there still remain seventy-three thousand; add to it the sixty thousand just paid for the surrender of the lease, and *you* will have one hundred and thirty-three thousand francs."

Mme. César listened in such glad excitement that Popinot could hear the beating of her heart.

"Well, I have always looked on Monsieur Birotteau as my partner," he continued; "we can employ the money in repaying his creditors. Your savings, twenty-eight thousand francs, in Uncle Pillerault's keeping, will raise the sum to a hundred and sixty-one thousand francs. Uncle will not refuse to give us a receipt for his twenty-five thousand francs. No power on earth can prevent my lending to my father-in-law, on account of next year's profits, enough to pay off the remainder of his creditors. And—he—will—be—rehabilitated——"

"Rehabilitated!" cried Mme. César, kneeling before her chair, and, clasping her hands, she repeated a prayer. The letter had slipped from her fingers. She crossed herself. "Dear Anselme!" she said, "dear boy!" She took his face in her hands, kissed him on the forehead, and held him tightly in her arms. "Césarine is yours, indeed," she cried. "My daughter will be very happy. She will leave the house where she is working herself to death."

"Through love," said Anselme.

"Yes," smiled the mother.

"Listen to a little secret," said Anselme, looking out of the corner of his eye at the unlucky letter. "I obliged Célestin

when he wanted capital to buy your business, but it was on one condition: Your rooms are just as you left them. I had my own idea, but I did not think then that fortune would favor us so greatly. Célestin has undertaken to sub-let your old rooms to you; he has not set foot in them, and all the furniture there is yours. I am reserving the third story, so that Césarine and I may live there; she shall never leave you. After we are married, I will spend the day here from eight o'clock in the morning till six in the evening. Then I will buy out Monsieur César's interest in the business for a hundred thousand francs, so that, with his post, you will have ten thousand livres a year. Will you not be happy?"

"Do not say any more, Anselme, or I shall go mad with joy."

Mme. César's angelic bearing, her pure eyes, the innocence on her fair brow, gave the lie so magnificently to the countless thoughts which surged up in the young lover's brain, that he made up his mind to slay the chimeras of his fancy. The sin was irreconcilable with the life and the sentiments of Pillerault's niece.

"My dear adored mother," he began, "a horrible doubt has just crossed my mind. If you would see me happy, you will set it at rest."

Popinot held out his hand as he spoke, and took possession of the letter.

"Unintentionally I read the first words in du Tillet's handwriting," he said, alarmed at the consternation in her face. "The words coincide so oddly with the effect you just produced upon the man, who complied at once with my extravagant demands, that anybody would find the explanation which the devil suggests to me in spite of myself. A glance from you, and three words were enough——"

"Stop," said Mme. César, and, taking back the letter, she burned it under Anselme's eyes. "I am cruelly punished for a trifling fault, my child. And now you must know all, An-

selme. The suspicion attaching to the mother must not do her daughter an injury, and, beside, I may speak without a blush ; I could tell my husband this that I am about to tell you. Du Tillet tried to seduce me, my husband was warned at once, and du Tillet was to be dismissed. The very day that my husband was to discharge him du Tillet took three thousand francs."

"I suspected it," said Popinot, with all his hatred of the man in his tone.

"Anselme, your future and your happiness required this confidence, but it must die in your own breast, as it had died in César's and mine. You surely remember the fuss my husband made about the mistake in the books. Monsieur Birotteau, no doubt, put three thousand francs into the safe (the price of the shawl, which was not given to me for three years), so as to avoid ruining the young man by bringing him into a police court. So there you have the explanation of my cry of surprise. Alas, my dear boy, I will confess my childish conduct. Du Tillet had written three love letters to me, letters which showed his nature so plainly that I kept them—as a curiosity. I only read them once ; but, after all, it was not wise to keep them. When I saw du Tillet, I thought of them, and went up to my room to burn them. When you came in, I was looking at the last one. That is all, my dear."

Anselme knelt and kissed Mme. César's hand. The expression in his eyes drew tears of admiring affection from hers. Constance raised her son-in-law and clasped him to her heart.

That day was destined to be a day of joy for César. The King's private secretary, M. de Vandenesse, came to the office to speak with him. They went out together into the little courtyard of the Sinking Fund Department.

"Monsieur Birotteau," said the Vicomte, "the story of your struggle to pay your creditors came by chance to the

King's knowledge. His majesty was touched by such unusual conduct; and learning that, from motives of humility, you were not wearing the cross of the Legion of Honor, he has sent me to command you to resume it. His majesty also wishes to assist you to discharge your obligations, and has ordered me to pay this amount to you out of his own privy purse, with regrets that he can do no more for you. Let the matter remain a profound secret, for his majesty thinks it little becomes a King to make official proclamation of his good actions," and the private secretary paid over six thousand francs to the employé, who heard these words with indescribable emotions.

Birotteau could only stammer inarticulate thanks. Vandenesse smiled and waved his hand. César's principles are so rarely seen in practice in Paris that by degrees his life had won just admiration. Joseph Lebas, Popinot the elder, Camusot, Ragon, the Abbé Loraux, the head partner of the firm which employed Césarine, Lourdois, and M. de la Billardière had spoken of it. The scale of opinion had already turned in his favor, and people praised him to the skies.

"There goes a man of honor!" The words had reached César's ears several times in the street; he heard them with the sensations of an author who hears his name pronounced. This fair renown disgusted du Tillet. César's first thought on receiving the King's bank-notes was of repayment to his ex-assistant. The good man betook himself to the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, and it so fell out that the banker, returning home from business, met him upon the staircase.

"Well, my poor Birotteau," said he, in a caressing tone.

"Poor?" the other cried proudly. "I am very rich. I shall lay my head on the pillow to-night with the satisfaction of knowing that I have paid you."

The words, so full of honesty, put du Tillet for a moment on the rack. Every one respected him, but he had lost his

own self-respect; a voice which could not be stifled cried within him, "This man is heroic!" But he spoke—

"Pay me! What business can you be in?" he enviously inquired.

Birotteau felt quite sure that du Tillet would not repeat the story.

"I shall never start in business again, sir. No human power could foresee the thing that befell me. Who knows but what I might be the victim of another Roguin? But my conduct has been put before the King, his heart has deigned to compassionate my struggles, and he has encouraged them by sending me at once a fairly large sum, which——"

"Do you want a receipt in full?" du Tillet cut him short. "Are you paying——"

"In full, and interest beside. So I must beg you to come to Monsieur Crottat's office, a step or two away."

"In the presence of a notary!"

"Why, sir, there is nothing to prevent me from thinking of my rehabilitation, and a document so authenticated is legal evidence——"

"Come, let us go," said du Tillet, and he went out with Birotteau; "it is only a step. But who will find you so much money?" he went on.

"No one finds it for me," said César. "I am earning it by the sweat of my brow."

"You owe an enormous amount to Claparon."

"Alas! yes, that is the heaviest of my debts; I am afraid the effort will be too much for me."

"Oh! you will never be able to pay it all," said du Tillet harshly.

"He is right," thought Birotteau.

He went home again by way of the Rue Saint-Honoré, a piece of inadvertence, for he always went round some other way that he might not see his shop, nor the windows of his old home. For the first time since his fall, he saw the house

where he had spent eighteen happy years, and three months of anguish that effaced those memories.

"I used to count on ending my days there," he said to himself; and he quickened his pace at the sight of a new name on the store-front:

CÉLESTIN CREVEL

Formerly César Birotteau.

"My eyes dazzle—— Is that Césarine?" he cried, thinking that he had seen a golden head at the window.

It was really Césarine whom he saw, and his wife was there, and so was Popinot. The two lovers knew that Birotteau never went past his old home; and it was impossible that they should imagine the great event in the Rue de l'Oratoire, so they had gone to make arrangements for the fête they were planning to give in Birotteau's honor. The strange apparition astonished César so much that he stood stockstill.

"There is Monsieur Birotteau looking at his old house," said M. Molineux to a storekeeper who lived over against the Queen of Roses.

"Poor man!" returned Birotteau's old neighbor, "he gave one of the grandest balls there—there were two hundred carriages in the street."

"I went to it; he went bankrupt three months afterward, and I was trustee," said Molineux.

Birotteau fled, his legs trembling beneath him, and reached Pillerault's house.

Pillerault knew what was passing in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants, and it seemed to him that his nephew was scarcely fit to bear the shock of a joy so great as his rehabilitation. He had been a daily witness of César's mental sufferings, knew that Birotteau's own stern doctrine as to bankrupts was always in his thoughts, and that he was living up to the very limit of his strength. Dead honor might yet have its Easter Day

for him; and it was this hope that gave him no respite from pain. Pillerault undertook to prepare César for the good news; so when he came in, his uncle was thinking how to attain his end. César began to tell the news of the interest that the King had taken in him, his joy seemed to Pillerault to be auspicious, and his amazement that Césarine should be at the window at the sign of the Queen of Roses afforded an excellent opening.

"Well, César," Pillerault began, "do you know what brought it about? Popinot is impatient to marry Césarine. He will not and ought not to be bound any longer by your extravagant ideas of honor, to spend his youth in eating dry bread and smelling a good dinner. Popinot is determined to pay off your creditors in full."

"He is going to buy his wife."

"Isn't it to his credit that he wants to rehabilitate his father-in-law?"

"But questions might be raised, and, beside——"

"And, beside," cried Uncle Pillerault in feigned anger, "you may sacrifice yourself if you like, but you have no right to sacrifice your daughter."

A lively discussion began, and Pillerault apparently worked himself up.

"Eh! If Popinot lent you nothing," cried he; "if he had looked upon you as his partner; if he chose to consider the money that he paid over to your creditors for your interest in the Oil as an advance on account of the profits, so that you should not be robbed——"

"It would look as though I had arranged with him to cheat my creditors."

Pillerault pretended to be defeated by this logic. He knew enough of human nature to guess that during the night the good man would argue out the case with himself; and those private reflections of his would accustom him to the idea of rehabilitation.

"But how came my wife and daughter to be in our old house?" he asked at dinner.

"Anselme means to take one of the floors, and he and Césarine will set up housekeeping there. Your wife is on his side. They have had the banns put up without telling you, so as to compel you to give your consent. Popinot says that there will be less merit in marrying Césarine after you are rehabilitated. You accept the King's six thousand francs, and yet you will take nothing from your relatives! Now, for my own part, I am quite justified in giving you a receipt in full; would you refuse it?"

"No," said César. "But it would not hinder me from saving the money to pay you, receipt or not."

"All this is splitting hairs," said Pillerault, "and when honesty is in question, I ought to be allowed to know what is right. What folly were you talking just now? When your creditors are all paid in full, will you still persist that you have cheated them!"

César looked full at Pillerault as he spoke, and it touched the older man to see a bright smile on his nephew's face after three years of dejection.

"You are right," he said, "they would be paid. But it is like selling my daughter!"

"And I wish to be bought," cried Césarine, who came in with Popinot.

The lovers stealing on tiptoe through the lobby had overheard the words. Mme. Birotteau was just behind them. The three had made a round in a cab, asking all the creditors to meet in Crottat's office that evening; Popinot's lover's logic bore down César's scruples; but he still persisted in calling himself a debtor, and would have it that he was outflanking the law by a substitution. Conscience yielded to an outburst from Popinot—

"So you mean to kill your daughter, do you?"

"Kill my daughter!" echoed César, bewildered.

"Well, now," said Popinot, "what is there to prevent me from making a deed of gift in your favor of a sum which on my conscience I believe to be yours? Can you refuse?"

"No," said César.

"Good. Then let us go to Alexandre Crottat this evening, so that there shall be no going back upon it, and our marriage-contract can be decided at the same time."

An application for reinstatement and all the necessary certificates were duly deposited by Derville at the office of the procureur-general of the Court of Appeal.

During the month which elapsed between the putting up of the banns and the marriage, and during the progress of the formalities, César lived in a state of constant nervous excitement. He was ill at ease. He feared that he might not live to see the great day when his disabilities should be formally removed. His pulse throbbed unaccountably, he said, and he complained of a dull pain about the heart. He had been exhausted by painful emotion and this supreme joy was wearing him out. Decrees of rehabilitation are rare in Paris; there is scarcely one in ten years.

There is something indescribably solemn and imposing in the ceremonial of justice for those who take society seriously. An institution is to men as they consider it, and is invested with dignity and grandeur by their thoughts. When a nation has ceased, not to feel the religious instinct, but to believe; when primary education relaxes the bonds of union by teaching children a habit of merciless anaylsis, a nation is dissolved; for the only ties that are left to bind men together and make of them one body are the ignoble ties of material interest and the dictates of the selfish cult created by egoism well carried out. Birotteau, sustained by religion, saw Justice as Justice ought to be regarded among men, as the expression of society itself; beneath the forms he saw the sovereign will, the laws by which men have agreed to live. If the magistrate is old, feeble, and white-haired, so much the more

solemn does his priestly office appear, an office which demands so profound a study of human nature and of things, an office to which the heart is immolated, for of necessity it becomes callous in a guardian of so many palpitating interests.

In these days the men who cannot ascend the staircase of the Court of Appeal in the old Palais de Justice in Paris without feeling deeply stirred are growing rare; but Birotteau was one of these men. There are not many who notice the majestic grandeur of that staircase, so magnificently planned to produce an effect. It rises at the further end of the peristyle which adorns the Cour du Palais. The doorway opens on the centre of the gallery which leads from the vast Salle des Pas Perdus at its one end to the Sainte-Chapelle at the other, two monuments which may well dwarf everything about them into insignificance. The church of St. Louis is in itself one of the grandest buildings in Paris, and there is an indescribable dim atmosphere of romance about it when approached by way of this gallery; while the vast Salle des Pas Perdus is flooded with daylight, and it is hard to forget memories of the history of France that cling about its walls. So the staircase must have a grandeur of its own if it is not utterly overshadowed by the glories of those two famous buildings. Perhaps there is something to stir the soul at the sight of the place where decrees are executed, beheld through the rich scroll-work of the screen of the Palais. The staircase gives entrance to a vast room, the Salle des Pas Perdus of this court, beyond which lies the Hall of Audience. Imagine the feeling with which Birotteau (always so much impressed by the circumstance of justice) mounted the staircase among a little crowd of his friends—Lebas, at that time president of the Tribunal of Commerce; Camusot, who had acted as registrar; Ragon, his old master; and the Abbé Loraux, his confessor. The presence of the good priest enhanced these earthly honors by a reflection from heaven, which gave them yet more value in César's eyes.

Pillerault, that practical philosopher, had bethought him of the expedient of dwelling upon and exaggerating the joy of the release, so that the actual experience might not overwhelm César. Just as he finished dressing he found himself surrounded by faithful friends, all anxious for the honor of accompanying him to the bar of the court. The delight which suffused the good man's soul at the sight of this group raised him to a pitch of happiness necessary for him if he was to endure the alarming ordeal. He found others of his friends standing in the Great Hall of Audience, where a dozen councilors were sitting.

After the case had been called, Birotteau's attorney made application in a brief formula. At a sign from the president, the attorney-general rose to give his opinion. In the name of the court, the attorney-general, the public accuser, was about to make demand that the merchant's honor, which had been pledged, should be vindicated; a proceeding unique in law, for a condemned man can only be pardoned. Those who have hearts that feel can imagine Birotteau's feelings when M. de Granville spoke somewhat as follows:

"Gentlemen," said the great lawyer, "on the 16th of January, 1820, Birotteau was declared a bankrupt by the Tribunal of Commerce of the Seine. The insolvency was not occasioned by imprudence on the part of the merchant, nor by dishonest speculation, nor any other cause which could stain his honor. We feel that it is necessary to state it publicly—the calamity was brought about by one of those disasters which occur from time to time, to the great affliction of justice and of the city of Paris. It was reserved for this present century, in which the evil leaven of subverted morals and revolutionary ideas will long ferment, to behold the Parisian notariat depart from the honorable traditions of its past; there have been more cases of insolvency in that body during the last few years than in two preceding centuries under the ancient monarchy. The greed of gold rapidly acquired has

seized upon officials, those guardians of the public welfare and intermediary authorities."

Then followed a tirade based on this text, in the course of which M. le Comte de Granville (speaking in character) took occasion to incriminate Liberals, Bonapartists, and all and sundry who were disaffected, as in duty bound. Events have shown that there was good ground for the councilor's apprehensions.

"The immediate cause of the plaintiff's ruin was the action of a Paris notary, who absconded with the money which Birotteau deposited with him. The sentence passed by the court in Roguin's case shows how shamefully he had betrayed his client's trust. A *concordat* followed. We will observe, for the honor of the applicant, that the proceedings were characterized by honesty not to be met with in the scandalous failures which daily occur in Paris. Birotteau's creditors, gentlemen, found every trifle that he possessed, down to trinkets and articles of wearing apparel belonging not only to him, but to his wife, who, to swell the assets, gave up all that she had. Birotteau at this juncture showed himself worthy of the respect which he had won by the discharge of his municipal functions; for he was at that time deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and had just received the cross of the Legion of Honor accorded to the devoted Royalist, who shed his blood for the cause on the steps of Saint-Roch in Vendémiaire; and, no less, to the consular judge, who had won respect by his ability and popularity by his conciliatory spirit; to the modest municipal officer, who declined the honors of the mayoralty for himself and put forward the name of another as more worthy—the honorable Baron de la Billardière, one of the noble Vendeans whom he had learned to esteem in evil days."

"He put that better than I did," said César in his uncle's ear.

"The creditors, therefore, receiving sixty per cent. of their

claims, thanks to the upright merchant and his wife and daughter, who surrendered everything that they possessed, gave expression to their respect in the *concordat*, by which they forwent the remainder of their claims in consideration of the dividend. The attention of the court is called to the manner in which this record is worded." Here the attorney-general read the *concordat*. "After such expressions of good-will, gentlemen, many a trader would have considered himself free, and would have walked with head erect in public; but, so far from considering his liabilities to be discharged, Birotteau would not give way to despair, but made an inward resolution to hasten the coming of a glorious day which here and now dawns for him. Nothing turned him aside from his purpose. Our beloved sovereign gave a post to the man who was wounded at Saint-Roch, and the bankrupt merchant set by the whole of his salary for the benefit of his creditors, for the devotion of his family did not fail him——"

Tears came into Birotteau's eyes as he squeezed his uncle's hand.

"His wife and daughter poured their earnings into the common treasury; they, too, had embraced Birotteau's loyal purpose. They descended from their position to take a subordinate place. Such sacrifices as these, gentlemen, deserve all honor, for they are the hardest of all. This was the task which Birotteau laid upon himself."

The attorney read an abbreviated version of the schedule, giving the names of the creditors and the balances due to them.

"Every one of these amounts, gentlemen, has been paid, interest included. The receipts have not been given by notes of hand which demand investigation, but by certificates of payment made in the presence of a notary, documents which do not abuse the good faith of the court, though, nevertheless, the inquiries required by the law have been duly made. You, therefore, restore to Birotteau not his honor,

but the civil and political privileges of which he has been deprived, and in so doing you do justice. Such cases come so seldom before you that we cannot refrain from giving expression to our admiration of the conduct of the applicant, who has already received the encouragement of august patronage."

With that, he read the formal application. The court deliberated without retiring, and the president rose to pronounce the decree.

"The court charges me to inform Monsieur Birotteau of the satisfaction with which the decree, granted under such circumstances, is passed. Call the next case."

Birotteau, already invested with a caftan of honor by the attorney-general's speech, was struck dumb with joy when he heard these solemn words from the president of the highest Court of Appeal in France, words which made those who heard them feel that the impassive Themis had a heart. He could not move from his place, he seemed to be glued to the floor, and gazed with bewildered eyes at the councilors, who seemed to him like angels who had opened the gates which admitted him to life among his fellows. His uncle took him by the arm and drew him away. Then César, who had not obeyed the desire of Louis XVIII., fastened the red ribbon at his button-hole, like a man in a dream, and went down in triumph with his friends about him to the hackney-cab.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked of Joseph Lebas, Pillerault, and Ragon.

"Home."

"No. It is three o'clock; I want to go on 'Change again, now that I have the right."

"To the Exchange," Pillerault gave the order and looked significantly at Lebas, for there were symptoms which made him uneasy; he feared for Birotteau's reason.

So Birotteau went back on 'Change between his uncle and Joseph Lebas; the two merchants whom every one respected

linked their arms in his. The news of his rehabilitation was abroad. Du Tillet was the first to see the three and old Ragon, who followed behind.

"Ah! my dear master! Delighted to hear that you have pulled through your difficulties. Perhaps I contributed to bring about this happy termination by allowing little Popinot to pluck me so easily. I am as glad of your happiness as if it were my own."

"It is the only way open to you," said Pillerault, "for you will never experience it yourself."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked du Tillet.

"A good dig in the ribs, by George," said Lebas, smiling at Pillerault's malicious revenge. He knew nothing of the part that du Tillet had played, but he looked on him as a scoundrel.

Matifat saw César, and immediately all the most respected merchants crowded about the perfumer; he received an ovation on 'Change, the most flattering congratulations and hand-shakes, which caused here and there some heart-burnings and here and there a pang of remorse, for fifty out of every hundred present had been insolvent at some time or other.

Gigonnet and Gobseck, chatting in a corner, stared at César as the learned must have stared when the first electric eel was brought for their inspection and they beheld that strange curiosity, a living leyden jar.

Then, still breathing the incense of triumph, César went out to the cab and drove home to his house, where the marriage-contract between his dear child Césarine and the devoted Popinot was to be signed that evening. He laughed nervously, in a way that alarmed his three old friends.

It is one of the mistakes of youth to imagine that every one has the vitality of youth, a defect nearly akin to its best endowment; for youth does not behold life through a pair of spectacles, but through the radiant hues of a reflected glow, and age itself is credited with its own exuberant life. Popi-

not, like César and Constance, cherished memories of the pomp and splendor of the ball: the strains of Collinet's orchestra had often rung in his ears; he had seen the gay throng of dancers, and tasted the joy so cruelly punished, as Adam and Eve might have thought of the forbidden fruit which banished them from the Garden, and brought Death and Birth into the world, for it seems that the multiplication of the angels is one of the mysteries of the Paradise above.

Popinot, however, could think of that night's festivity not only without remorse, but with joy in his heart, for then it was that Césarine in all her glory had given her promise to him in his poverty. That evening he had known beyond all doubt that he was loved for himself alone. So when he paid Célestin for the rooms which Grindot had restored, and stipulated that everything should be left untouched; when he had carefully seen that the merest trifles belonging to César and Constance were in their place, he had dreamed of giving a ball there on the day of his wedding. The preparations for the fête had been a work of love. It should be exactly like the previous one, except in the extravagances. Extravagance was over and done with. Still, the dinner was to be served by Chevet, and the guests were almost the same. The Abbé Loraux took the place of the grand chancellor; and Lebas, the president of the Tribunal of Commerce, was to be there. Popinot added M. Camusot's name to the list, as an acknowledgment of the kindness he had shown to Birotteau in so many ways. M. de Vandenesse and M. de Fontaine took the place of M. and Mme. Roguin.

Césarine and Popinot had exercised their discretion in the matter of invitations to the ball. They both shrank from making a festival of their wedding, and had avoided the publicity which jars on pure and tender hearts by giving the dance on the occasion of the signing of the contract. Constance had found the cherry-colored velvet dress in which she had shone for the brief space of a single day; and Césarine

had pleased herself by surprising Popinot in the ball-dress of which he had talked times out of mind. So the house was to wear the same air of an enchanted festival, and neither Constance, nor Césarine, nor Anselme thought that there was any danger for César in this joyful surprise. They waited till four o'clock, and grew almost childish in their happiness.

After the hero of the hour had passed through the indescribable emotions of returning to the Exchange, a fresh shock awaited him in the Rue Saint-Honoré. As he came up the stairs, which still looked new, he saw his wife in the cherry-colored velvet dress; he saw Césarine, the Comte de Fontaine, the Vicomte de Vandenesse, the Baron de la Billardière, and the great Vauquelin; a light film spread over his eyes, and Uncle Pillerault, on whose arm he leaned, felt the shudder that ran through his nephew.

"It is too much for him," the old philosopher said to the enamored Anselme; "he will not stand all the wine which you have poured out for him."

But all hearts beat so high with joy that César's emotion and tottering steps were ascribed to an intoxication, very natural, as they thought—but not seldom fatal. When he looked round the drawing-room and saw it filled with guests and women in ball toilets, the sublime rhythm of the *finale* of Beethoven's great symphony beat in his pulses and flooded his brain. That imaginary music streamed in on him like rays of light, sparkling from modulation to modulation; it was to be, indeed, the *finale* that rang clear and high through the recesses of the tired brain. Overcome by the harmony that swept through him, he laid his hand on his wife's arm, and in tones, rendered almost inaudible by the effort to keep back the flowing blood which filled his mouth—

"I am not well," he said.

Constance, in alarm, led her husband to her room; he was barely able to reach the armchair, into which he sank, exclaiming, "Monsieur Haudry! Monsieur Loraux!"

The abbé came in, followed by the guests and women in evening dress, who stood in consternation. César, in the midst of this brightly colored throng, grasped his confessor's hand, and laid his head on the breast of the wife who knelt beside him. A bloodvessel had been ruptured in the lungs and the resulting aneurism was stopping his last breath.

"Behold the death of the righteous!" the Abbé Loraux said solemnly, as he stretched his hand toward César with one of those divine gestures which Rembrandt's inspiration beheld and recorded in his picture of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

Christ bade Earth surrender her prey; the good priest sped a soul to heaven, where the martyr to commercial integrity should receive an unfading palm.



GAUDISSART THE GREAT.

GAUDISSART THE GREAT

(*L'Illustre Gaudissart*).

PARISIANS IN THE COUNTRY.

Translated by JAMES WARING.

To Madame la Duchesse de Castries.

Is not the commercial traveler—a being quite unknown in earlier times—one of the most curious types produced by the manners and customs of this age? And is it not his peculiar function to carry out in a certain class of things the immense transition which connects the age of material development with that of intellectual development? Our epoch will be the link between the age of isolated forces rich in original creativeness and that of the uniform but leveling force which gives monotony to its products, casting them in masses, and following out one unifying idea—the ultimate expression of social communities. After the Saturnalia of intellectual communism, after the last struggles of many civilizations concentrating all the treasures of the world on a single spot, must not the darkness of barbarism invariably supervene?

The commercial traveler is to ideas what coaches are to men and things. He carts them about; he sets them moving, brings them into impact. He loads himself at the centre of enlightenment with a supply of beams which he scatters among torpid communities. This human *pyrophoros* is an ignorant instructor, mystified and mystifying, a disbelieving priest who talks all the more glibly of arcana and dogmas. A strange figure! The man has seen every-

thing, he knows everything, he is acquainted with everybody. Saturated in Parisian vice, he can assume the rusticity of the countryman. Is he not the link that joins the village to the capital, though himself not essentially either Parisian or provincial?

For he is a wanderer. He never sees to the bottom of things; he learns only the names of men and places, only the surface of things; he has his own foot-rule and measures everything by that standard; his glance glides over all he sees, and never penetrates the depths. He is inquisitive about everything, and really cares for nothing. A scoffer, always ready with a political song, and apparently equally attached to all parties, he is generally patriotic at heart. A good actor, he can assume by turns the smile of liking, satisfaction, and obligingness, or cast it off and appear in his true character, in the normal frame which is his state of rest.

He is bound to be an observer or to renounce his calling. Is he not constantly compelled to sound a man at a glance, and guess his mode of action, his character, and, above all, his solvency; and, in order to save time, to calculate swiftly the chances of profit? This habit of deciding promptly in matters of business makes him essentially dogmatic; he settles questions out of hand and talks, as a master, of the Paris theatres and actors, and of those in the provinces. Beside, he knows all the good and all the bad places in the kingdom, by both doing and seeing. He would steer you with equal confidence to the abode of virtue or of vice. Gifted as he is with the eloquence of a hot-water tap turned on at will, he can with equal readiness stop short or begin again, without a mistake, his stream of ready-made phrases, flowing without pause, and producing on the victim the effect of a moral douche. He is full of pertinent anecdotes, he smokes, he drinks. He wears a chain with seals and trinkets, he impresses the "small fry," is looked at as a *milord* in the vil-

lages, never allows himself to be "got over"—a word of his slang—and knows exactly when to slap his pocket and make the money jingle so as not to be taken for a "sneak" by the women servants—a suspicious race—of the houses he calls at.

As to his energy, is it not the least of the characteristics of this human machine? Not the kite pouncing on its prey, not the stag inventing fresh doublings to escape the hounds and put the hunter off the trail, not the dogs coursing the game, can compare with the swiftness of his rush when he scents a commission, the neatness with which he trips up a rival to gain upon him, the keenness with which he feels, sniffs, and spies out an opportunity for "doing business." How many special talents must such a man possess! And how many will you find in any country of these diplomats of the lower class, profound negotiators, representatives of the calico, jewelry, cloth, or wine trades, and often with more acumen than ambassadors, who are indeed for the most part but superficial?

Nobody in France suspects the immense power constantly wielded by the commercial traveler, the bold pioneer of the transactions which embody to the humblest hamlet the genius of civilization and Parisian inventiveness in its struggle against the commonsense, the ignorance, or the habits of rustic life. We must not overlook these ingenious laborers, by whom the intelligence of the masses is kneaded, moulding the most refractory material by sheer talk, and resembling in this the persevering polishers whose file licks the hardest porphyry smooth. Do you want to know the power of the tongue and the coercive force of mere phrases on the most tenacious coin known —that of the country freeholder in his rustic lair? Then listen to what some high dignitary of Paris industry can tell you, for whose benefit these clever pistons of the steam-engine called speculation work, and strike, and squeeze.

"Monsieur," said the director-cashier-manager-secretary-

and-chairman of a famous fire insurance company to an experienced economist, "in the country, out of five hundred thousand francs to be collected in renewing insurances, not more than fifty thousand are paid willingly. The other four hundred and fifty thousand are only extracted by the persistency of our agents, who go to dun the customers who are in arrears till they have renewed their policies, and frighten and excite them by fearful tales of fires. Eloquence, the gift of the gab, is, in fact, nine-tenths of the matter in the ways and means of working our business."

To talk—to make one's self heard—is not this seduction? A nation with two Chambers, a woman with two ears, alike are lost! Eve and the serpent are the perennial myth of a daily recurring fact which began and will probably only end with the world.

"After two hours' talk you ought to have won a man over to your side," said an attorney who had retired from business.

Walk round the commercial traveler! Study the man. Note his olive-green overcoat, his cloak, his morocco stock, his pipe, his blue-striped cotton shirt. In that figure, so genuinely original that it can stand friction, how many different natures you may discover. See! What an athlete, what a circus, and what a weapon! He—the world—and his tongue.

A daring seaman, he embarks with a stock of mere words to go and fish for money, five or six hundred thousand francs, say, in the frozen ocean, the land of savages, of Iroquois—in France! The task before him is to extract by a purely mental process and painless operation the gold that lies buried in rural hiding-places. The provincial fish will not stand the harpoon or the torch; it is only to be caught in the seine or the landing-net—the gentlest snare.

Can you ever think again without a shudder of the deluge of phrases which begins anew every day at dawn in France? You know the genus; now for the individual.

There dwells in Paris a matchless drummer, the paragon of his kind, a man possessing in the highest degree every condition indispensable to success in his profession. In his words vitriol mingles with bird-lime: bird-lime to catch the victim, besmear it and stick it to the trapper, vitriol to dissolve the hardest limestone.

His "line" was hats—he *traveled in hats;* but his gifts, and the skill with which he ensnared folk, had earned him such commercial celebrity that dealers in *l'Article Paris,** the dainty novelties invented in Paris workshops, positively courted him to undertake their business. Thus, when he was in Paris, on his return from some triumphant progress, he was perpetually being feasted; in the provinces the agents made much of him; in Paris the largest houses were respectful to him. Welcomed, entertained, and fed wherever he went, to him a breakfast or a dinner in solitude was a pleasure and a debauch. He led the life of a sovereign—nay, better, of a journalist. And was he not the living organ of Paris trade?

His name was Gaudissart; and his fame, his influence, and the praises poured on him had gained him the epithet of Gaudissart the Great. Wherever he made his appearance, whether in a counting-house or an inn, in a drawing-room or a diligence, in a garret or a bank, each one would exclaim on seeing him, "Ah, ha! here is Gaudissart the Great!"

Never was a nickname better suited to the appearance, the manners, the countenance, the voice, or the language of a man. Everything smiled on the traveler, and he smiled on all. *Similia Similibus;* he was for homœopathy: Puns, a horse-laugh, the complexion of a jolly friar, a Rabelaisian aspect; dress, mien, character, and face combined to give his whole person a stamp of jollification and ribaldry.

Blunt in business, good-natured and capital fun, you would have known him at once for a favorite of the *grisette*—a man who can climb with a grace to the top of a coach, offer a hand

* Fancy notions.

to a lady in difficulties over getting out, jest with the postillion about his bandana, and sell him a hat; smile at the inn-maid, taking her by the waist—or by the fancy; who at table will imitate the gurgle of a bottle by tapping his cheek while putting his tongue in it, knows how to make beer go off by drawing the air between his lips, can hit a champagne glass a sharp blow with a knife without breaking it, saying to the others, "Can you do that?"—who chaffs shy travelers, contradicts well-informed men, is supreme at table, and secures all the best bits.

A clever man, too, he could on occasion put aside all such pleasantries and look very serious when, throwing away the end of his cigar, he would look out on a town and say, "I mean to see what the folk here are made of." Then Gaudissart was the most cunning and shrewd of ambassadors. He knew how to be the official with the prefect, the capitalist with the banker, orthodox and monarchical with the Royalist, the blunt citizen with the citizen—in short, all things to all men, just what he ought to be wherever he went, leaving Gaudissart outside the door, and finding him again as he went out.

Until 1830 Gaudissart the Great remained faithful to the *Article Paris*. This line of business, in all its branches, appealing to the greater number of human fancies, had enabled him to study the secrets of the heart, had taught him the uses of his persuasive eloquence, the way to open the most closely tied money-bags, to incite the fancy of wives and husbands, of children and servants, and to persuade them to gratify it. None so well as he knew how to lure a dealer by the temptations of a job, and to turn away at the moment when his desire for the bait was at a climax. He acknowledged his indebtedness to the hatter's trade, saying that it was by studying the outside of the head that he had learned to understand its inside, that he was accustomed to find caps to fit folk, to throw

himself at their head, and so forth. His jests on hats were inexhaustible.

Nevertheless, after the August and October of 1830, he gave up traveling in hats and the *Article Paris*, and left off trading in all things mechanical and visible to soar in the loftier spheres of Parisian enterprise. He had given up matter for mind, as he himself said, and manufactured products for the infinitely more subtle outcome of the intellect.

This needs explanation.

The stir and upset of 1830 gave rise, as everybody knows, to the new birth of various antiquated ideas which skillful speculators strove to rejuvenate. After 1830 ideas were more than ever a marketable commodity; and, as was once said by a writer who is clever enough to publish nothing, more ideas than pocket-handkerchiefs are filched nowadays. Some day, perhaps, there may be an Exchange for ideas; but even now, good or bad, ideas have their price, are regarded as a crop imported, transferred, and sold, can be realized, and are viewed as an investment. When there are no ideas in the market, speculators try to bring words into fashion, to give them the consistency of an idea, and live on those words as birds live on millet.

Nay, do not laugh! A word is as good as an idea in a country where the ticket on the bale is thought more of than the contents. Have we not seen the book-trade thriving on the word "picturesque" when literature had sealed the doom of the word "fantastic."

Consequently, the excise has levied a tax on the intellect; it has exactly measured the acreage of advertisements, has assessed the prospectus, and weighed thought—Rue de la Paix *Hôtel du Timbre* (the Stamp Office). On being constituted taxable goods, the intellect and its products were bound to obey the method used in manufacturing undertakings. Thus the ideas conceived after drinking in the brain of some of those apparently idle Parisians who do battle on intellectual

ground while emptying a bottle or carving a pheasant's thigh, were handed over the day after their mental birth to commercial travelers, whose business it was to set forth, with due skill, *urbi et orbi*, the fried bacon of advertisement and prospectus by which the departmental mouse is tempted into the editor's trap, and becomes known in the vulgar tongue as a subscriber, or a shareholder, a corresponding member, or, perhaps, a backer or a part owner—and being always a flat.

"What a flat I am!" has more than one poor investor exclaimed after being tempted by the prospect of *founding* something, which has finally proved to be the founding that melts down some thousand or twelve hundred francs.

"Subscribers are the fools who cannot understand that it costs more to forge ahead in the realm of intellect than to travel all over Europe," is the speculator's view.

So there is a constant struggle going on between the dilatory public which declines to pay the Paris taxes and the collectors who, living on their percentages, baste that public with new ideas, lard it with undertakings, roast it with prospectuses, spit it on flattery, and at last eat it up with some new sauce in which it gets caught and intoxicated like a fly in molasses. What has not been done in France since 1830 to stimulate the zeal, the conceit of the *intelligent* and *progressive* masses? Titles, medals, diplomas, a sort of Legion of Honor, invented for the vulgar martyrs, have crowded on each other's heels. And then every manufacturer of intellectual commodities has discovered a spice, a special condiment, his particular make-weight. Hence the promises of premiums and of anticipated dividends; hence the advertisements of celebrated names without the knowledge of the hapless artists who own them, and thus find themselves implicated unawares in more undertakings than there are days in the year; for the law could not foresee this theft of names. Hence, too, this rape of ideas which the contractors for public intelligence—like the slave merchants of the East—snatch from the paternal brain

at a tender age, and strip and parade before the greenhorn, their bewildered Sultan the terrible public, who, if not amused, beheads them by stopping their rations of gold.

This mania of the day reacted on Gaudissart the Great, and this was how: A company gotten up to effect insurances on life and property heard of his irresistible eloquence and offered him extraordinarily handsome terms, which he accepted. The bargain concluded, the compact signed, the drummer was weaned of the past under the eye of the secretary of the society, who freed Gaudissart's mind of its swaddling-clothes, explained the dark corners of the business, taught him its lingo, showed him all the mechanism bit by bit, anatomized the particular class of the public on whom he was to work, stuffed him with cant phrases, crammed him with repartees, stocked him with peremptory arguments, and, so to speak, put an edge on the tongue that was to operate on life in France. The puppet responded admirably to the care lavished on him by Monsieur the Secretary.

The directors of the insurance company were so loud in their praises of Gaudissart the Great, showed him so much attention, put the talents of this living prospectus in so favorable a light in the higher circles of banking and of intellectual diplomacy, that the financial managers of two newspapers, then living but since dead, thought of employing him to tout for subscriptions. The "Globe," the organ of the doctrines of Saint-Simon, and the "Mouvement," a Republican paper, invited Gaudissart the Great to their private offices and promised him, each, ten francs a head on every subscriber if he secured a thousand, but only five francs a head if he could catch no more than five hundred. As the *line* of the political paper did not interfere with that of the insurance company, the bargain was concluded. At the same time, Gaudissart demanded an indemnity of five hundred francs for the week he must spend in "getting up" the doctrine of Saint-Simon, pointing out what efforts of memory

and brain would be necessary to enable him to become thoroughly conversant with this *article*, and to talk of it so coherently as to avoid, said he, "putting his foot in it."

He made no claim on the Republicans. In the first place, he himself had a leaning to Republican notions—the only views according to the Gaudissart philosophy that could bring about rational equality; and then Gaudissart had ere now dabbled in the plots of the French *carbonari* (Nativists and Extreme Democrats). He had even been arrested, but released for lack of evidence; and, finally, he pointed out to the backers of the paper that since July he had allowed his mustache to grow, and that he now only needed a particular shape of cap and long spurs to be representative of the Republic.

So for a week he went every morning to be Saint-Simonized at the "Globe" office, and every evening he haunted the bureau of the insurance company to learn the elegancies of financial slang. His aptitude and memory were so good that he was ready to start by the 15th of April, the date at which he usually set out on his first annual circuit.

Two large commercial houses, alarmed at the downward tendency of trade, tempted the ambitious Gaudissart still to undertake their agency, and the King of Commercial Travelers showed his clemency in consideration of old friendship and of the enormous percentage he was to take.

"Listen to me, my little Jenny," said he, riding in a hack with a pretty little flower-maker.

Every truly great man loves to be tyrannized over by some feeble creature, and Jenny was Gaudissart's tyrant; he was seeing her home at eleven o'clock from the Gymnase theatre, where he had taken her in full dress to a private box on the first tier.

"When I come back, Jenny, I will furnish your room quite elegantly. That gawky Mathilde, who makes you sick with her innuendoes, her real Indian shawls brought by the Rus-

sian ambassador's messengers, her silver-gilt, and her Russian Prince—who is, it strikes me, a rank humbug—even she shall not find a fault in it. I will devote all the 'Children' I can get in the provinces to the decoration of your room."

"Well, that is a nice story, I must say," cried the florist. "What, you monster of a man, you talk to me so coolly of your children! Do you suppose that I will put up with anything of that kind?"

"Pshaw! Jenny, are you out of your wits? It is a way of talking in my line of business."

"A pretty line of business indeed!"

"Well, but listen; if you go on talking so much, you will find yourself in the right."

"I choose always to be in the right! I may say you are a cool hand to-night."

"You will not let me say what I have to say? I have to push a most capital idea, a magazine that is to be brought out for children. In our walk of life a traveler, when he has worked up a town and got, let us say, ten subscriptions to the 'Children's Magazine,' says I have gotten ten 'Children;' just as, if I had ten subscriptions to the 'Mouvement,' I should simply say I have gotten ten 'Mouvements.' Now do you understand?"

"A pretty thing too! So you are meddling in politics? I can see you already in Sainte-Pélagie, and shall have to trot there to see you every day. Oh, when we love a man, my word! If we knew what we are in for, we should leave you to manage for yourselves, you men! Well, well, you are going to-morrow, don't let us get the black dog on our shoulders; it is too silly."

The cab drew up before a pretty house, newly built, in the Rue d'Artois, where Gaudissart and Jenny went up to the fourth floor. Here resided Mademoiselle Jenny Courand, who was commonly supposed to have been privately married to Gaudissart, a report which the traveler did not deny. To

maintain her power over him, Jenny Courand compelled him to pay her a thousand little attentions, always threatening to abandon him to his fate if he failed in the least of them. Gaudissart was to write to her from each town he stopped at and give an account of every action.

"And how many 'Children' will you want to furnish my room?" said she, throwing off her shawl and sitting down by a good fire.

"I get five sous on each subscription."

"A pretty joke! Do you expect to make me a rich woman —five sous at a time? Unless you are a wandering Jew and have your pocket sewn up tight."

"But, Jenny, I shall get thousands of 'Children.' Just think, the little ones have never had a paper of their own. However, I am a great simpleton to try to explain the economy of business to you—you understand nothing about such matters."

"And pray, then, Gaudissart, if I am such a gaby, why do you love me?"

"Because you are such a sublime gaby! Listen, Jenny. You see, if I can get people to take the 'Globe' and the 'Mouvement,' and to pay their insurances, instead of earning a miserable eight or ten thousand francs a year by trundling around like a man in a show, I may make twenty to thirty thousand francs out of one round."

"Unlace my stays, Gaudissart, and pull straight—don't drag me askew."

"And then," said the commercial traveler, as he admired the girl's satin shoulders, "I shall be a shareholder in the papers, like Finot, a friend of mine, the son of a hatter, who has thirty thousand francs a year, and will get himself made a peer! And when you think of little Popinot! By the way, I forgot to tell you that Monsieur Popinot was yesterday made minister of commerce. Why should not I, too, be ambitious? Ah, ha! I could easily catch the cant of the

Tribune, and I might be made a minister—something like a minister, too! Just listen—

"'Gentlemen,'" and he took his stand behind an armchair, "'the press is not a mere tool, nor a mere trade. From the point of view of the politician, the press is an institution. Now we are absolutely required here to take the political view of things, hence'"—he paused for breath—"'hence we are bound to inquire whether it is useful or mischievous, whether it should be encouraged or repressed, whether it should be taxed or free—serious questions all. I believe I shall not be wasting the precious moments of this Chamber by investigating this article and showing you the conditions of the case. We are walking on to a precipice. The laws indeed are not so guarded as they should be——'

"How is that?" said he, looking at Jenny. "Every orator says that France is marching toward a precipice; they either say that or they talk of the chariot of the State and political tempest and clouds on the horizon. Don't I know every shade of color! I know the dodges of every trade. And do you know why? I was born with a caul on. My old grandmother kept the caul, and I will give it to you. So, you see, I shall soon be in power!"

"You?"

"Why shouldn't I be Baron Gaudissart and Peer of France? Has not Monsieur Popinot been twice returned deputy for the fourth arrondissement? And he dines with Louis-Philippe. Finot is to be a councilor of State, they say. Oh! if only they would send me to London as ambassador, I am the man to nonplus the English, I can tell you. Nobody has ever caught Gaudissart napping—Gaudissart the Great. No, no one has ever gotten the better of me, and no one ever shall in any line, politics or impolitics, here or anywhere. But for the present I must give my mind to insuring property, to the 'Globe,' to the 'Mouvement,' to the 'Children's' paper, and to the 'Article de Paris.'"

"You will be caught over your newspapers. I will lay a wager that you will not get as far as Poitiers without being done."

"I am ready to bet, my jewel."

"A shawl!"

"Done. If I lose the shawl, I will go back to trade and hats. But, get the better of Gaudissart? Never! never!"

And the illustrious commercial traveler struck an attitude in front of Jenny, looking at her haughtily, one hand in his vest, and his head half-turned in a Napoleonic pose.

"How absurd you are! What have you been eating this evening!"

Gaudissart was a man of eight-and-thirty, of middle height, burly and fat, as a man is who is accustomed to go about in mail-coaches; his face was as round as a pumpkin, florid, and with regular features, resembling the traditional type adopted by sculptors in every country for their statues of Abundance, of Law, Force, Commerce, and the like. His prominent stomach was pear-shaped and his legs were thin, but he was wiry and active. He picked up Jenny, who was half-undressed, and carried her to her bed.

"Hold your tongue, *free woman*," said he. "Ah, you don't know anything about the free woman and Saint-Simonism, and antagonism, and Fourierism, and criticism, and determined push—well it is—in short, it is ten francs on every subscription, Madame Gaudissart."

"On my honor, you are going crazy, Gaudissart."

"Always more and more crazy about you," said he, tossing his hat on to the sofa.

Next day, after breakfasting in style with Jenny Courand, Gaudissart set out on horseback to call in all the market towns which he had been particularly instructed to work up by the various companies to whose success he was devoting his genius. After spending forty-five days in beating the country lying between Paris and Blois, he stayed for a fortnight in this little

city, devoting the time to writing letters and visiting the neighboring towns. The day before leaving for Tours he wrote to Mademoiselle Jenny Courand the following letter, of which the fullness and charm cannot be matched by any narrative, and which also serves to prove the peculiar legitimacy of the ties that bound these two persons together:

Letter from Gaudissart to Jenny Courand.

"My dear Jenny:—I am afraid you will lose your bet. Like Napoleon, Gaudissart has his star, but will know no Waterloo. I have triumphed everywhere under the conditions set forth. The insurance business is doing very well. Between Paris and Blois I secured near on two millions; but toward the middle of France heads are remarkably hard, and millions infinitely scarcer. The *Article Paris* toddles on nicely, as usual; it is a ring on your finger. With my usual rattle, I can always come round the storekeepers. I got rid of sixty-two Ternaux shawls at Orleans; but, on my honor, I don't know what they will do with them unless they put them back on the sheep.

"As to the newspaper line, the deuce is in it! that is quite another pair of shoes. God above us! what a deal of piping those good people take before they have learned a new tune. I have gotten no more than sixty-two 'Mouvements' so far; and that in my whole journey is less than the Ternaux shawls in one town. These rascally Republicans won't subscribe at all; you talk to them, and they talk; they are quite of your way of thinking, and you are soon all agreed to upset everything that exists. Do you think the man will fork out? Not a bit of it. And if he has three square inches of ground, enough to grow a dozen cabbages, or wood enough to cut a toothpick, your man will talk of the settlement of landed estate, of taxation, and crops, and compensation—a pack of nonsense, while I waste my time and spittle in patriotism.

Business is bad, and the 'Mouvement' generally is dull. I am writing to the owners to say so. And I am very sorry as a matter of opinion.

"As to the 'Globe,' that is another story. If I talk of the new doctrines to men who seem likely to have a leaning to such quirks, you might think it was a proposal to burn their house down. I tell them that it is the coming thing, the most advantageous to their interests, the principle of work by which nothing is lost; that men have oppressed men long enough, that woman is a slave, that we must strive to secure the triumph of the great Idea of thrift, and achieve a more rational coördination of society—in short, all the rhodomontade at my command. All in vain! As soon as I start on this subject, these country louts shut up their cupboards as if I had come to steal something, and beg me to be off.

"What fools these owls are! The 'Globe' is nowhere. I told them so. I said, 'You are too advanced. You are getting forward, and that is all very well; but you must have something to show. In the provinces they want to see results.' However, I have gotten a hundred 'Globes;' and, seeing the density of these country noodles, it is really a miracle. But I promise them such a heap of fine things, that be hanged if I know how the Globules, or Globists, or Globites, or Globians are ever going to give them. However, as they assured me that they would arrange the world far better than it is arranged at present, I lead the way and prophesy good things at ten francs per head.

"There is a farmer who thought it must have to do with soils, by reason of the name, and I rammed the 'Globe' down his throat; he will take to it, I feel sure; he has a prominent forehead, and men with prominent foreheads are always ideologists.

"But as to the children! give me the children. I got two thousand children between Paris and Blois—a nice little turn! And there is less waste of words. You show the pic-

ture to the mother on the sly, so that the child wants to see; then, of course, the child sees; and he tugs at mamma's skirts till he gets his paper, because 'Daddy has his'n paper.' Mamma's gown cost twenty francs, and she does not want it torn by the brat; the paper costs but six francs, that is cheaper; so the subscription is dragged out. It is capital, and meets a real want—something between the sugar-plum and the picture-book, the two eternal cravings of childhood. And they can read, too, these frenzied brats.

"Here, at the table d'hôte, I had a dispute about newspapers and my opinions. I was sitting, peacefully eating, by the side of a man in a white hat who was reading the 'Débats.' Said I to myself, 'I must give him a taste of my eloquence. Here is a man who is all for the dynasty; I must try to catch him. Such a triumph would be a splendid forecast of success as a minister.' So I set to work, beginning by praising his paper. It was a precious long job, I can tell you. From one thing to another I began to overrule my man, giving him four-horse speeches, arguments in F sharp, and all the precious rhodomontade. Everybody was listening, and I saw a man with 'July' in his mustaches, ready to bite for the 'Mouvement.' But, by ill-luck, I don't know how I let slip the word *ganache* (old woman). Away went my dynastic white hat—and a bad hat too, a Lyons hat, half-silk and half-cotton—with the bit between his teeth in a fury. So I put on my grand air—you know it—and I say to him, 'Heyday, monsieur, you are a hot pot! If you are vexed, I am ready to answer for my words. I fought in July——' 'Though I am the father of a family,' says he, 'I am ready——' 'You are the father of a family, my dear sir,' say I. 'You have children?' 'Yes, monsieur.' 'Of eleven?' 'Thereabouts.' 'Well, then, monsieur, "The Children's Magazine" is just about to be published—six francs *per annum*, one number a month, two columns, contributors of the highest literary rank, gotten up in the best style,

good paper, illustrations from drawings by our first artists, genuine India-paper proofs, and colors that will not fade.' And then I give him a broadside. The father is overpowered! The squabble ends in a subscription.

"'No one but Gaudissart can play that game,' cried little tomtit Lamard to that long noodle Bulot when he told him the story at the café.

"To-morrow I am off to Amboise. I shall do Amboise in two days and write next from Tours, where I am going to try my hand on the deadliest country from the point of view of intelligence and speculation. But, on the honor of Gaudissart, they will be done, they *shall* be done! Done brown! By-by, little one; love me long and always be true to me. Fidelity through thick and thin is one of the characteristics of the free woman. Who kisses your eyes?

"Yours, FÉLIX for ever."

Five days later Gaudissart set out one morning from the Faisan hotel, where he put up at Tours, and went to Vouvray, a rich and populous district where the public mind seemed to him to be open to conviction. He was trotting along the river quay on his nag, thinking no more of the speeches he was about to make than an actor thinks of the part he has played a hundred times. Gaudissart the Great cantered on, admiring the landscape, and thinking of nothing, never dreaming that the happy valleys of Vouvray were to witness the overthrow of his commercial infallibility.

It will here be necessary to give the reader some insight into the public spirit of Touraine. The peculiar wit of a sly romancer, full of banter and epigram, which stamps every page of Rabelais' work, is the faithful expression of the Tourangeau nature, of an intellect as keen and polished as it must inevitably be in a province where the Kings of France long held their court; an ardent, artistic, poetical, and luxurious nature, but prompt to forget its first impulse. The softness

of the atmosphere, the beauty of the climate, a certain ease of living and simplicity of manners, soon stifle the feeling for art, narrow the most expansive heart, and corrode the most tenacious will.

Transplant the native of Touraine, and his qualities develop and lead to great things, as has been proved in the most dissimilar ways by Rabelais and by Semblançay; by Plantin the printer and by Descartes; by Boucicault, the Napoleon of his day; by Pinaigrier, who painted the greater part of our cathedral glass; by Verville and Courier. But, left at home, the countryman of Touraine, so remarkable elsewhere, remains like the Indian on his rug, like the Turk on his divan. He uses his wit to make fun of his neighbor, to amuse himself, and to live happy to the end of his days. Touraine is the true Abbey of Thelema, so much praised in Gargantua's book. Consenting nuns may be found there, as in the poet's dream, and the good-cheer sung so loudly by Rabelais is supreme.

As to his indolence, it is sublime, and well characterized in the popular witticism: "Tourangeau, will you have some broth?" "Yes." "Then bring your bowl." "I am no longer hungry."

Is it to the glee of the vine-dresser, to the harmonious beauty of the loveliest scenery in France, or to the perennial peace of a province which has always escaped the invading armies of the foreigner, that the soft indifference of those mild and easy habits is due? To this question there is no answer. Go yourself to that Turkey in France, and there you will stay, indolent, idle, and happy. Though you were as ambitious as Napoleon or a poet like Byron, an irresistible, indescribable influence would compel you to keep your poetry to yourself and reduce your most ambitious schemes to day-dreams.

Gaudissart the Great was fated to meet in Vouvray one of those indigenous wags whose mockery is offensive only by

its absolute perfection of fun, and with whom he had a deadly battle. Rightly or wrongly, your Tourangeau likes to come into his father's property. Hence the doctrines of Saint-Simon were held particularly odious, and heartily abused in those parts; still, only as things are hated and abused in Touraine, with the disdain and lofty pleasantry worthy of the land of good stories and jokes played between neighbors—a spirit which is vanishing day by day before what Lord Byron called English cant.

After putting up his horse at the Soleil d'Or, kept by one Mitouflet, a discharged grenadier of the Imperial Guard, who had married a wealthy mistress of vinelands, and to whose care he solemnly confided his steed, Gaudissart, for his sins, went first to the prime wit of Vouvray, the life and soul of the district, the jester whose reputation and nature alike made it incumbent on him to keep his neighbors' spirits up. This rustic Figaro, a retired dyer, was the happy possessor of seven or eight thousand francs a year, of a pretty house on the slope of a hill, of a plump little wife, and of robust health. For ten years past he had had nothing to do but to take care of his garden and his wife, to get his daughter married, to play his game of an evening, to keep himself informed of all the scandal that came within his jurisdiction, to give trouble at elections, to squabble with the great landowners, and arrange big dinners; to air himself on the quay, inquire what was going on in the town, and bother the priest; and, for dramatic interest, to look out for the sale of a plot of ground that cut into the ring fence of his vineyard. In short, he lived the life of Touraine, the usual life of a small country town.

At the same time, he was the most important of the minor notabilities of the place and the leader of the small proprietors—a jealous and envious class, chewing the cud of slander and calumny against the aristocracy, and repeating them with relish, grinding everything down to one level, hostile to every

form of superiority, scorning it, indeed, with the admirable coolness of ignorance.

Monsieur Vernier—so this little great man of the place was named—was finishing his breakfast, between his wife and his daughter, when Gaudissart made his appearance in the dining-room—one of the most cheerful dining-rooms for miles around, with a view from the windows over the Loire and the Cher.

"Is it to Monsieur Vernier himself that I now have the honor——?" said the traveler, bending his vertebral column with so much grace that it seemed to be elastic.

"Yes, monsieur," said the wily dyer, interrupting him with a scrutinizing glance, by which he at once took the measure of the man he had to do with.

"I have come, monsieur," Gaudissart went on, "to request the assistance of your enlightenment to direct me in this district where, as I learn from Mitouflet, you exert the greatest influence. I am an emissary, monsieur, to this department in behalf of an undertaking of the highest importance, backed by bankers who are anxious——"

"Anxious to swindle us!" said Vernier, laughing, long since used to deal with the commercial traveler and to follow his game.

"Just so," replied Gaudissart the Great with perfect impudence. "But, as you very well know, sir, since you are so clear-sighted, people are not to be swindled unless they think it to their interest to allow themselves to be swindled. I beg you will not take me for one of the common ruck of commercial gentlemen who trust to cunning or importunity to win success. I am no longer a *traveler;* I was one, monsieur, and I glory in it. But I have now a mission of supreme importance, which ought to make every man of superior mind regard me as devoted to the enlightenment of his fellow-countrymen. Be kind enough to hear me, monsieur, and you will find that you will have profited greatly by the half-hour's conversation I beg you to grant me. The great Paris bankers have not

merely lent their names to this concern, as to certain discreditable speculations such as I call mere rat-traps. No, no, nothing of the kind. I can assure you, I would never allow myself to engage in promoting such booby-traps. No, monsieur, the soundest and most respectable houses in Paris are concerned in the undertaking, both as shareholders and as guarantors——"

And Gaudissart unrolled the frippery of his phrases, while Monsieur Vernier listened with an affectation of interest that quite deceived the orator. But at the word guarantor, Vernier had, in fact, ceased to heed this drummer's rhetoric; he was bent on playing him some sly trick, so as to clear off this kind of Parisian caterpillar, once for all, from a district justly regarded as barbarian by speculators, who can get no footing there.

At the head of a delightful valley, known as the *Vallée coquette* (coquette's valley), from its curves and bends, new at every step, and each more charming than the last, whether you go up or down the winding slope, there dwelt, in a little house surrounded by a vineyard, a more than half-crazy creature named Margaritis. This man, an Italian by birth, was married, but had no children, and his wife took care of him with a degree of courage that was universally admired; for Madame Margaritis certainly ran some risk in living with a man who, among other manias, insisted on always having two long knives about him, not unfrequently threatening her with them. But who does not know the admirable devotion with which country people care for afflicted creatures, perhaps in consequence of the discredit that attaches to a middle-class wife if she abandons her child or her husband to the tender mercies of a public asylum? Again, the aversion is well known which country folk feel for paying a hundred louis, or perhaps a thousand crowns, the price charged at Charenton or in a private asylum. If any one spoke to Madame Margaritis of Dubuisson, Esquirol, Blanche, or other mad-doctors,

she preferred, with lofty indignation, to keep her three thousand francs and her good man.

The inexplicable caprices of this worthy's insanity being closely connected with the course of my story, it is needful to mention some of his more conspicuous vagaries. Margaritis would always go out as soon as it began to rain, to walk bareheaded among his vines. Indoors he was perpetually asking for the newspaper; just to satisfy him, his wife or the maid-servant would give him an old "Journal d'Indre-et-Loire," and for seven years he had never discovered that it was always the same copy. A doctor might perhaps have found it interesting to note the connection between his attacks of asking for the paper and the variations in the weather. The poor madman's constant occupation was to study the state of the sky and its effect on the vines.

When his wife had company, which was almost every evening—for the neighbors, in pity for her position, came in to play boston with her—Margaritis sat in silence in a corner, never moving; but when ten o'clock struck by a clock in a tall wooden case, he rose at the last stroke with the mechanical precision of the figures moved by a spring in a German toy, went slowly up to the card-players, looked at them with eyes strangely like the automatic gaze of the Greeks and Turks to be seen in the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, and said, "Go away!"

At times, however, this man recovered his natural wits and could then advise his wife very shrewdly as to the sale of her wine; but at those times he was exceedingly troublesome, stealing dainties out of the cupboards and eating them in secret.

Occasionally when the customary visitors came in he answered their inquiries civily, but he more often replied quite at random. To a lady who asked him, "How are you today, Monsieur Margaritis?" "I have shaved," he would reply, "and you?"

"Are you better, monsieur?" another would say. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" was the answer. But he usually looked at them with a blank face, not speaking a word, and then his wife would say, "The goodman cannot hear anything today." Twice or thrice in the course of five years, always about the time of the equinox, he had flown into a rage at this remark, had drawn a knife, and shrieked, "That hussy disgraces me!"

Still, he drank, ate, and walked out like any man in perfect health; and by degrees every one was accustomed to pay him no more respect or attention than if he had been a clumsy piece of furniture.

Of all his eccentricities, there was one to which no one had ever been able to discover a clue; for the wise heads of the district had in the course of time accounted for, or explained, most of the poor lunatic's maddest acts. He insisted on always having a sack of flour in the house, and on keeping two casks of wine from the vintage, never allowing any one to touch either the flour or the wine. But, when the month of June came round, he began to be anxious to sell the sack and the wine-barrels with all the fretfulness of a madman. Madame Margaritis generally told him that she had sold the two puncheons at an exorbitant price, and gave him the money, which he then hid without his wife or his servant ever having succeeded, even by watching, in discovering the hiding-place.

The day before Gaudissart's visit to Vouvray, Madame Margaritis had had more difficulty than ever in managing her husband, who had an attack of lucid reason.

"I declare I do not know how I shall get through tomorrow," said she to Madame Vernier. "Only fancy, my old man insisted on seeing his two casks of wine. And he gave me no peace all day till I showed him two full puncheons. Our neighbor, Pierre Champlain, luckily had two casks he had not been able to sell, and at my request he rolled them into our cellar. And then what must he want, after seeing

the casks, but nothing will content him but selling them himself."

Madame Vernier had just been telling her husband of this difficult state of things when Gaudissart walked in. At the commercial traveler's very first words Vernier determined to let him loose on old Margaritis.

"Monsieur," replied the dyer, when Gaudissart the Great had exhausted his first broadside, "I will not conceal from you that your undertaking will meet with great obstacles in this district. In our part of the world the good folk go on, bodily, in a way of their own; it is a country where no new idea can ever take root. We live as our fathers did, amusing ourselves by eating four meals a day, occupying ourselves by looking after our vineyards, and selling our wine at a good price. Our notion of business is, very honestly, to sell things for more than they cost. We shall go on in that rut, and neither God nor the devil can get us out of it. But I will give you some good advice, and good advice is worth an eye. We have in this neighborhood a retired banker, in whose judgment I myself have the utmost confidence, and if you win his support you shall have mine. If your proposals offer any substantial prospects, and we are convinced of it, Monsieur Margaritis' vote carries mine with it, and there are twenty well-to-do houses in Vouvray where purses will be opened and your panacea will be tried."

As she heard him mention the madman, Madame Vernier looked up at her husband.

"By the way, I believe my wife was just going to call on Madame Margaritis with a neighbor of ours. Wait a minute, and the ladies will show you the way. You can go round and pick up Madame Fontanieu," said the old dyer with a wink at his wife.

This suggestion that she should take with her the merriest, the most voluble, the most facetious of all the merry wives of Vouvray, was as much as to tell Madame Vernier to secure a

witness to report the scene which would certainly take place between the drummer and the lunatic, so as to amuse the country with it for a month to come. Monsieur and Madame Vernier played their parts so well that Gaudissart had no suspicions and rushed headlong into the snare. He politely offered his arm to Madame Vernier and fancied he had quite made a conquest of both ladies on the way, being dazzlingly witty, and pelting them with waggery and puns which they did not understand.

The so-called banker lived in the first house at the opening into the Vallée coquette. It was called la Fuye, and was not particularly remarkable. On the first floor was a large paneled sitting-room, with a bedroom on each side for the master and mistress. The entrance was through a hall, where they dined, opening into the kitchen. This first floor, quite lacking the external elegance for which even the humblest dwellings in Touraine are noted, was crowned by attics, to which an outside stair led up, built against one of the gable ends, and covered in by a lean-to roof. A small garden, full of marigolds, seringa, and alders, divided the house from the vineyard. Round the courtyard were the buildings for the wine-presses and storage.

Margaritis, seated in a yellow Utrecht velvet chair by the window in the drawing-room, did not rise as the ladies came in with Gaudissart; he was thinking of the sale of his butts of wine. He was a lean man, with a pear-shaped head, bald above the forehead, and furnished with a few hairs at the back. His deep-set eyes, shaded by thick, black brows, and with dark rings round them, his nose as thin as the blade of a knife, his high cheek-bones and hollow cheeks, his generally oblong outline—everything, down to his absurdly long flat chin, contributed to give a strange look to his countenance, suggesting that of a professor of rhetoric—or of a ragpicker.

"Monsieur Margaritis," said Madame Vernier, "come,

wake up! Here is a gentleman sent to you by my husband, and you are to hear him with attention. Put aside your mathematical calculations and talk to him."

At this speech the madman rose, looked at Gaudissart, waved to him to be seated, and said—

"Let us talk, monsieur."

The three women went into Madame Margaritis' room, leaving the door open so as to hear all that went on, and intervene in case of need. Hardly were they seated when Monsieur Vernier came in quietly from the vineyard, and made them let him in through the window without a sound.

"You were in business, monsieur?" Gaudissart fluently began.

"Public business," replied Margaritis, interrupting him, "I pacified Calabria when Murat was King."

"Heyday, he has been in Calabria now!" said Vernier in a whisper.

"Oh, indeed!" said Gaudissart. "Then, monsieur, we cannot fail to come to an understanding."

"I am listening," replied Margaritis, settling himself in the attitude of a man sitting for his portrait.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, fidgeting with his watch-key, which he twisted round and round without thinking of what he was doing, with a regular rotatory twirl which engaged the madman's attention and, perhaps, helped to keep him quiet; "Monsieur, if you were not a man of superior intelligence"—Margaritis bowed—"I should restrict myself to setting forth the material advantages of this concern; but its psychological value is worthy of your attention. Mark me! Of all forms of social wealth, time is the most precious; to save time is to grow rich, is it not? Now, is there anything which takes up more time in our lives than anxiety as to what I may call boiling the pot—a homely metaphor, but clearly stating the question? Or is there anything which consumes more time than the lack of a guarantee to offer as security to those of

whom you ask money when, though impecunious for a time, you yet are rich in prospects?"

"Money—you have come to the point."

"Well, then, monsieur, I am the emissary to the departments of a company of bankers and capitalists who have perceived what enormous loss of time, and consequently of productive intelligence and activity, is thus entailed on men with the future before them. Now, the idea has occurred to us that, to such men, we may capitalize the future, we may discount their talents, by discounting what? why, their time, and securing its value to their heirs. This is not merely to economize time; it is to price it, to value it, to represent in a pecuniary form the products you may expect to obtain in a certain unknown time by representing the moral qualities with which you are gifted, and which are, monsieur, a living force, like a waterfall, or a steam-engine of three, ten, twenty, fifty horse-power. This is progress, a great movement toward a better order of things, a movement due to the energy of our age—an essentially progressive age, as I can prove to you when we come to the conception of a more logical coördination of social interests.

"I will explain myself by tangible instances. I quit the purely abstract argument which we, in our line, call the mathematics of ideas. Supposing that instead of being a man of property, living on your dividends, you are a painter, a musician, a poet——"

"I am a painter," the other put in by way of parenthesis.

"Very good, so be it, since you take my metaphor; you are a painter, you have a great future before you. But I am going further——"

At those words the lunatic studied Gaudissart uneasily to see if he meant to go away, but was reassured on seeing him remain seated.

"You are nothing at all," Gaudissart went on, "but you feel yourself——"

"I feel myself," said Margaritis.

"You say to yourself, 'I shall be a minister;' very good. You, the painter, you, the artist, the man of letters, the future minister, you calculate your prospects, you value them at so much—you estimate them, let us say—at a hundred thousand crowns——"

"And you have brought me a hundred thousand crowns?" said the lunatic.

"Yes, monsieur, you will see. Either your heirs will get them without fail, in the event of your death, since the company pledges itself to pay, or, if you live, you get them by your works of art or your fortunate speculations. Nay, if you have made a mistake, you can begin all over again. But, when once you have fixed the value, as I have had the honor of explaining to you, of your intellectual capital—for it is intellectual capital, bear that clearly in mind, monsieur."

"I understand," said the madman.

"You sign a policy of insurance with this company, which credits you with the value of a hundred thousand francs—you, the painter——"

"I am a painter," said Margaritis.

"You the musician, the minister—and promises to pay that sum to your family, your heirs, if, in consequence of your demise, the hopes of the income to be derived from your intellectual capital should be lost. The payment of the premium is thus all that is needed to consolidate your——"

"*Your* cash-box," said the madman, interrupting him.

"Well, of course, monsieur; I see that you understand business."

"Yes," said Margaritis, "I was the founder of the Banque Territoriale, Rue des Fossés-Montmartre in Paris, in 1798."

"For," Gaudissart went on, "in order to repay the intellectual capital with which each of us credits himself, must not all who insure pay a certain premium—three per cent., annually three per cent.? And thus, by paying a very small

sum, a mere nothing, you are protecting your family against the disastrous effects of your death."

"But I am alive," objected the lunatic.

"Ah yes, and if you live to be old—that is the objection commonly raised, the objection of the vulgar, and you must see that if we had not anticipated and annihilated it, we should be unworthy to become—what? What are we, in fact? The book-keepers of the great Bank of Intellect.

"Monsieur, I do not say this to you; but wherever I go, I meet with men who pretend to teach something new, to bring forward some fresh argument against those who have grown pale with studying the business—on my word of honor, it is contemptible! However, the world is made so, and I have no hope of reforming it. Your objection, monsieur, is absurd——"

"*Quésaco?* (What?)" said Margaritis.

"For this reason. If you should live, and if you have the money credited to you in your policy of insurance against the chances of death—you follow me——"

"I follow."

"Well, then, it is because you have succeeded in your undertakings! And you will have succeeded solely in consequence of that policy of insurance; for, by ridding yourself of all the anxieties which are involved in having a wife at your heels, and children whom your death may reduce to beggary, you simply double your chances of success. If you are at the top of the tree, you have grasped the intellectual capital compared with which the insurance money is a trifle, a mere trifle."

"An admirable idea!"

"Is it not, monsieur? I call this beneficent institution the Mutual Insurance against beggary!—or, if you prefer it, the Office for discounting Talent. For talent, sir, talent is a bill of exchange, bestowed by nature on a man of genius, and which is often at long date—ha, hah!"

"Very handsome usury," cried Margaritis.

"The deuce! He is sharp enough, this old boy! I have made a mistake; I must attack this man on higher grounds with palaver A1," thought Gaudissart. "Not at all," monsieur," said he aloud. "To you who——"

"Will you take a glass of wine?" asked Margaritis.

"With pleasure," said Gaudissart.

"Wife! give us a bottle of the wine of which two casks are left. You are here in the headquarters of Vouvray," said the master, pointing to his vines. "The clos (vineyard) Margaritis."

The maid brought in glasses and a bottle of the wine of 1819. The worthy lunatic filled a glass with scrupulous care and solemnly presented it to Gaudissart, who drank it.

"But you are playing me some trick, monsieur," said the commercial traveler. "This is Madeira, genuine Madeira!"

"I should think it is!" replied the lunatic. "The only fault of the Vouvray wine, monsieur, is that it cannot be used as an *ordinaire*, as a table wine. It is too generous, too strong; and it is sold in Paris as Madeira after being doctored with brandy. Our wine is so rich that many of the Paris merchants, when the French crop is sufficient for Holland and Belgium, buy our wine to mix with the wine grown about Paris, and so manufacture a Bordeaux wine. But what you are drinking at this moment, my dear and very amiable sir, is fit for a king; it is the head of Vouvray. I have two casks, only two casks of it. Persons who appreciate the finest wines, high-class wines, and like to put a wine on their table which has a character not to be met with in the regular trade, apply direct to us. Now, monsieur, do you happen to know any one——"

"Let us get back to our business," said Gaudissart.

"We are there, monsieur," replied the madman. "My wine is heady, and you are talking of capital; the etymology

of capital is *caput*—head. Heh? The head of Vouvray—the connection is obvious."

"As I was saying," persisted Gaudissart, "either you have realized your intellectual capital——"

"I have realized, monsieur. Will you take my two punch eons? I will give you favorable terms."

"No," said Gaudissart the Great, "I allude to the insurance of intellectual capital and policies on life. I will resume the thread of my argument."

The madman grew calmer, sat down, and looked at Gaudissart.

"I was saying, monsieur, that if you should die, the capital is paid over to your family without difficulty."

"Without difficulty."

"Yes, excepting in the case of suicide——"

"A question for the law."

"No, sir. As you know, suicide is an act that is always easily proved."

"In France," said Margaritis. "But——"

"But abroad," said Gaudissart. "Well, monsieur, to conclude that part of the question, I may say at once that death abroad or on the field of battle is not included——"

"What do you insure, then? Nothing whatever," cried the other. "Now, my bank was based on——"

"Nothing whatever, sir?" cried Gaudissart, interrupting him. "Nothing whatever? How about illness, grief, poverty, and the passions? But we need not discuss exceptional cases."

"No, we will not discuss them," said the madman.

"What, then, is the upshot of this transaction?" exclaimed Gaudissart. "To you, as a banker, I will simply state the figures. You have a man, a man with a future, well dressed, living on his art—he wants money, he asks for it—a blank. Civilization at large will refuse to advance money to this man, who, in thought, dominates over civilization, who will some day dominate over it by his brush, his chisel, by words,

or ideas, or a system. Civilization is merciless. She has no bread for the great men who provide her with luxuries; she feeds them on abuse and mockery, the gilded slut! The expression is a strong one, but I will not retract it. Well, your misprized great man comes to us; we recognize his greatness, we bow to him respectfully, we listen to him, and he says to us—

"'Gentlemen of the insurance company, my life is worth so much; I will pay you so much per cent. on my works.' Well, what do we do? At once, without grudging, we admit him to the splendid banquet of civilization as an important guest——"

"Then you must have wine," said the madman.

"As an important guest. He signs his policy, he takes our contemptible paper rags—mere miserable rags, which, rags as they are, have more power than his genius had. For, in fact, if he wants money, everybody on seeing that sheet of paper is ready to lend to him. On the Bourse, at the bankers', anywhere, even at the money-lenders', he can get money—because he can offer security. Well, sir, was not this a gulf that needed filling in the social system?

"But, sir, this is but a part of the business undertaken by the life insurance company. We also insure debtors on a different scale of premiums. We offer annuities on terms graduated by age, on an infinitely more favorable calculation than has yet been allowed in tontines based on tables of mortality now known to be inaccurate. Our society, operating on the mass, our annuitants need have no fear of the reflections that sadden their latter years, in themselves sad enough; such thoughts as must necessarily invade them when their money is in private hands. So, you see, monsieur, we have taken the measure of life under every aspect——"

"Sucked it at every pore," said Margaritis. "But take a glass of wine; you have certainly earned it. You must lay some velvet on your stomach if you want to keep your jaw in

working order. And the wine of Vouvray, monsieur, is, when old enough, pure velvet."

"And what do you think of it all?" said Gaudissart, emptying his glass.

"It is all very fine, very new, very advantageous; but I think better of the system of loans on land that was in use in my bank in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre."

"There you are right, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "that has been worked and worked out, done and done again. We now have the Mortgage Society which lends on real estate, and works that system on a large scale. But is not that a mere trifle in comparison with our idea of consolidating possibilities. Consolidating hopes, coagulating—financially—each man's desires for wealth, and securing their realization. It remained for our age, sir, an age of transition—of transition and progress combined!"

"Ay, of progress," said the lunatic. "I like progress, especially such as brings good times for the wine-trade——"

"The 'Times—le Temps'——!" exclaimed Gaudissart, not heeding the madman's meaning. "A poor paper, sir; if you take it in, I pity you."

"The newspaper?" cried Margaritis. "To be sure, I am devoted to the newspaper. Wife, wife! where is the newspaper?" he went on, turning toward the door.

"Very good, monsieur; if you take an interest in the papers, we shall certainly agree."

"Yes, yes; but before you hear the paper, confess that this wine is——"

"Delicious," said Gaudissart.

"Come on, then, we will finish the bottle between us." The madman a quarter filled his own glass and poured out a bumper for Gaudissart.

"As I say, sir, I have two casks of that very wine. If you think it good, and are disposed to deal——"

"The fathers of the Saint-Simonian doctrine have, in fact,

commissioned me to forward them such products as—— But let me tell you of their splendid newspaper. You, who understand the insurance business, and are ready to help me to extend it in this district——"

"Certainly," said Margaritis, "if——"

"Of course, if I take your wine. And your wine is very good, monsieur; it goes to the spot."

"Champagne is made of it. There is a gentleman here, from Paris, who has come to make champagne at Tours."

"I quite believe it. The 'Globe,' which you must have heard mentioned——"

"I know it well," said Margaritis.

"I was sure of it," said Gaudissart. "Monsieur, you have a powerful head—a bump which is known as the equine head. There is something of the horse in the head of every great man. Now a man can be a genius and live unknown. It is a trick that has happened often enough to men who, in spite of their talents, live in obscurity, and which nearly befell the great Saint-Simon and Monsieur Vico, a man of mark who is making his way. He is coming on well is Vico, and I am glad. Here we enter on the new theory and formula of the human race. Attention, monsieur——"

"Attention!" echoed Margaritis.

"The oppression of man by man ought to have ended, monsieur, on the day when Christ—I do not say Jesus Christ, I say Christ—came to proclaim the equality of men before God. But has not this equality been hitherto the most illusory chimera? Now, Saint-Simon supplements Christ. Christ has served His time——"

"Then, is He released?" asked Margaritis.

"He has served His time from the point of view of Liberalism. There is something stronger to guide us now—the new creed, free and individual creativeness, social coördination by which each one shall receive his social reward equitably, in accordance with his work, and no longer be the hireling of

individuals who, incapable themselves, make *all* labor for the benefit of one alone. Hence the doctrine——"

"And what becomes of the servants?" asked Margaritis.

"They remain servants, monsieur, if they are only capable of being servants."

"Then of what use is the doctrine?"

"Oh, to judge of that, monsieur, you must take your stand on the highest point of view whence you can clearly command a general prospect of humanity. This brings us to Ballanche! Do you know Monsieur Ballanche?"

"It is my principal business," said the madman, who misunderstood the name for *la planche* (boards or staves).

"Very good," said Gaudissart. "Then, sir, if the palingenesis and successive developments of the spiritualized 'Globe' touch you, delight you, appeal to you—then, my dear sir, the newspaper called the 'Globe,' a fine name, accurately expressing its mission—the 'Globe' is the cicerone who will explain to you every morning the fresh conditions under which, in quite a short time, the world will undergo a political and moral change."

"What is that?" asked Margaritis.

"I will explain the argument by a simile," said Gaudissart. "If, as children, our nurses took us to Séraphin, do not we older men need a presentment of the future? These gentlemen——"

"Do they drink wine?"

"Yes, monsieur. Their house is established, I may say, on an admirable footing—a prophetic footing; handsome receptions, all the bigwigs, splendid parties."

"To be sure," said the madman, "the laborers who pull down must be fed as well as those who build."

"All the more so, monsieur, when they pull down with one hand and build up with the other, as the apostles of the 'Globe' do."

"Then they must have wine, the wine of Vouvray; the two

casks I have left—three hundred bottles for a hundred francs —a mere song."

"How much a bottle does that come to?" said Gaudissart. "Let me see; there is the carriage, and the town dues—not seven sous—a very good bargain." ("I have caught my man," thought Gaudissart. "You want to sell me the wine, which I want, and I can get the whip hand of you.") "They pay more for other wine," he went on. "Well, monsieur, men who haggle are sure to agree. Speak honestly; you have considerable influence in the district?"

"I believe so," said the madman. "The head of Vouvray, you see."

"Well, and you perfectly understand the working of the intellectual capital insurance?"

"Perfectly."

"You have realized the vast proportions of the 'Globe?'"

"Twice—on foot."

Gaudissart did not heed him; he was entangled in the maze of his own thoughts, and listening to his own words, assured of success.

"Well, seeing the position you hold, I can understand that at your age you have nothing to insure. But, monsieur, you can persuade those persons in this district to insure who, either by their personal merits or by the precarious position of their families, may be anxious to provide for the future. And so, if you will subscribe to the 'Globe,' and if you will give me the support of your authority in this district to invite the investment of capital in annuities—for annuities are popular in the provinces—well, we may come to an agreement as to the purchase of the two casks of wine. Will you take in the 'Globe?'"

"I live on the Globe."

"Will you support me with the influential residents in the district?"

"I support——"

"And——"

"And?——"

"And I—— But you will pay your subscription to the 'Globe?'"

"The 'Globe'—a good paper—an annuity?"

"An annuity, monsieur? Well, yes, you are right; for it is full of life, of vitality, and learning; choke full of learning; a handsome paper, well printed, a good color, thick paper. Oh, it is none of your flimsy shoddy, mere waste-paper that tears if you look at it. And it goes deep, gives you reasoning that you may think over at leisure, and pleasant occupation here in the depths of the country."

"That is the thing for me," said the madman.

"It costs a mere trifle—eighty francs a year."

"That is not the thing for me," said Margaritis.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, "of course you have little children?"

"Some," said Margaritis, who misunderstood *have* for *love*.

"Well, then, the 'Journal des Enfants,' seven francs a year——"

"Buy my two casks of wine," said Margaritis, "and I will subscribe to your children's paper; that is the thing for me; a fine idea. Intellectual tyranny—a child—heh? Does not man tyrannize over man?"

"Right you are," said Gaudissart.

"Right I am."

"And you consent to steer me round the district?"

"Round the district."

"I have your approbation?"

"You have."

"Well, then, sir, I will take your two casks of wine at a hundred francs——"

"No, no, a hundred and ten."

"Monsieur, a hundred and ten, I will say a hundred and ten, but it is a hundred and ten to the gentlemen of the paper

and one hundred to me. If I find you a buyer, you owe me a commission."

"A hundred and twenty to them. No commission to the commissioners."

"Very neat. And not only witty, but spirited."

"No, spirituous."

"Better and better—like Nicolet."

"That is my way," said the lunatic. "Come and look at my vineyards?"

"With pleasure," said Gaudissart. "That wine goes strangely to the head."

And Gaudissart the Great went out with Monsieur Margaritis, who led him from terrace to terrace, from vine to vine.

The three ladies and Monsieur Vernier could laugh now at their ease, as they saw the two men from the window gesticulating, haranguing, standing still, and going on again, talking vehemently.

"Why did your good man take him out of hearing?" said Vernier.

At last Margaritis came in again with the commercial traveler; they were both walking at a great pace as if in a hurry to conclude the business.

"And the countryman, I bet, has been too many for the Parisian," said Vernier.

In point of fact, Gaudissart the Great, sitting at one end of the card-table, to the great delight of Margaritis, wrote an order for the delivery of two casks of wine. Then, after reading through the contract, Margaritis paid him down seven francs as a subscription to the children's paper.

"Till to-morrow, then, monsieur," said Gaudissart the Great, twisting his watch-key; "I shall have the honor of calling for you to-morrow. You can send the wine to Paris direct to the address I have given you, and forward it as soon as you receive the money."

Gaudissart was from Normandy; there were two sides to

every bargain he made, and he required an agreement from Monsieur Margaritis, who with a madman's glee in gratifying his favorite whim, signed, after reading, a contract to deliver two casks of wine of "Clos Margaritis."

So Gaudissart went off in high spirits, humming *Le roi des mers, prends plus bas*, to the Golden Sun inn, where he naturally had a chat with the host while waiting for dinner. Mitouflet was an old soldier, simple but cunning, as peasants are, but never laughing at a joke, as being a man who is accustomed to the roar of cannon, and to passing a jest in the ranks.

"You have some very tough customers hereabouts," said Gaudissart, leaning against the door-post and lighting his cigar at Mitouflet's pipe.

"How is that?" asked Mitouflet.

"Well, men who ride roughshod over political and financial theories."

"Whom have you been talking to, if I may make so bold?" asked the innkeeper guilelessly, while he skillfully expectorated after the manner of smokers.

"To a wideawake chap named Margaritis."

Mitouflet glanced at his customer, twice, with calm irony.

"Oh yes, he is wideawake, no doubt! He knows too much for most people; they don't follow him——"

"I can quite believe it. He has a thorough knowledge of the higher branches of finance."

"Yes, indeed," said Mitouflet; "and, for my part, I have always thought it a pity that he should be mad."

"Mad? How?"

"How? Why, mad, as a madman is mad," repeated the tavern-keeper. "But he is not dangerous, and his wife looks carefully after him. So you understood each other? That's funny," said the relentless Mitouflet, with the utmost calm.

"Funny?" cried Gaudissart. "Funny? But your precious Monsieur Vernier was making a fool of me!"

"Did he send you there?" said Mitouflet.

"Yes."

"I say, wife," cried the innkeeper, "listen to that! Monsieur Vernier actually sent monsieur here to talk to old Margaritis——"

"And what did you find to say to each other, my good gentleman," said the woman, "since he is quite mad?"

"He sold me two casks of wine."

"And you bought them?"

"Yes."

"But it is his mania to want to sell wine; he has none."

"Very good!" cried the drummer. "In the first place, I will go and thank Monsieur Vernier."

Gaudissart, boiling with rage, went off to the house of the ex-dyer, whom he found in his parlor laughing with the neighbors, to whom he was already telling the story.

"Monsieur," said this Prince of Drummers, his eyes glaring with wrath, "you are a sneak and a blackguard; and if you are not the lowest of turnkeys—a class I rank below the convicts—you will give me satisfaction for the insult you have done me by placing me in the power of a man whom you knew to be mad. Do you hear me, Monsieur Vernier, the dyer?"

This was the speech Gaudissart had prepared, as a tragedian prepares his entrance on the stage.

"What next?" retorted Vernier, encouraged by the presence of his neighbors. "Do you think we have not good right to make game of a gentleman who arrives at Vouvray with an air and a flourish, to get our money out of us under pretense of being great men—painters or verse-mongers—and who thus gratuitously places us on a level with a penniless horde, out at elbows, homeless and roofless? What have we done to deserve it, we who are fathers of families? A rogue, who asks us to subscribe to the 'Globe,' a paper which preaches as the first law of God, if you please, that a man

shall not inherit what his father and mother can leave him? On my sacred word of honor, old Margaritis can talk more sense than that.

"And, after all, what have you to complain of? You were quite of a mind, you and he. These gentlemen can bear witness that if you had speechified to all the people in the countryside you would not have been so well understood."

"That is all very well to say, but I consider myself insulted, monsieur, and I expect satisfaction."

"Very good, sir; I consider you insulted if that will be any comfort to you, and I will not give you satisfaction, for there is not satisfaction enough in the whole silly business for me to give you any. Is he absurd, I ask you?"

At these words Gaudissart rushed on the dyer to give him a blow; but the Vouvrillons were on the alert and threw themselves between them, so that Gaudissart the Great only hit the dyer's wig, which flew off and alighted on the head of Mademoiselle Claire Vernier.

"If you are not satisfied now, monsieur, I shall be at the inn till to-morrow morning; you will find me there, and ready to show you what is meant by satisfaction for an insult. I fought in July, monsieur!"

"Very well," said the dyer, "you shall fight at Vouvray; and you will stay here rather longer than you bargained for."

Gaudissart departed, pondering on this reply, which seemed to him ominous of mischief. For the first time in his life he dined cheerlessly.

The whole borough of Vouvray was in a stir over the meeting between Gaudissart and Monsieur Vernier. A duel was a thing unheard of in this benign region.

"Monsieur Mitouflet, I am going to fight Monsieur Vernier to-morrow morning," said Gaudissart to his host. "I know nobody here; will you be my second?"

"With pleasure," said Mitouflet.

Gaudissart had hardly finished his dinner when Madame

Fontanieu and the mayor's deputy came to the Golden Sun, took Mitouflet aside, and represented to him what a sad thing it would be for the whole district if a violent death should occur; they described the frightful state of affairs for good Madame Vernier, and implored him to patch the matter up so as to save the honor of the community.

"I will see to it," said the innkeeper with a wink.

In the evening Mitouflet went up to Gaudissart's room, carrying pens, ink, and paper.

"What is all that?" inquired Gaudissart of the tavern-keeper.

"Well, as you are to fight to-morrow, I thought you might be glad to leave some little instructions and that you might wish to write some letters, for we all have some one who is dear to us. Oh! that will not kill you. Are you a good fencer? Would you like to practice a little? I have some foils."

"I should be glad to do so."

Mitouflet fetched the foils and two masks.

"Now, let us see."

The innkeeper and the drummer stood on guard. Mitouflet, who had been an instructor of grenadiers, hit Gaudissart sixty-eight times, driving him back to the wall.

"The devil! you are good at the game!" said Gaudissart, out of breath.

"I am no match for Monsieur Vernier."

"The deuce! Then I will fight with pistols."

"I advise you to. You see, if you use large horse-pistols and load them to the muzzle, they are sure to kick and miss, and each man withdraws with unblemished honor. Leave me to arrange it. By the mass, two good men would be great fools to kill each other for a jest."

"Are you sure the pistols will fire wide enough? I should be sorry to kill the man," said Gaudissart.

"Sleep easy."

Next morning the adversaries, both rather pale, met at the foot of the Pont de la Cise.

The worthy Vernier narrowly missed killing a cow that was grazing by the roadside ten yards off.

"Ah! you fired in the air!" exclaimed Gaudissart, and with these words the enemies fell into each other's arms.

"Monsieur," said the traveler, "your joke was a little rough, but it was funny. I am sorry I spoke so strongly, but I was beside myself. I hold you a man of honor."

"Monsieur, we will get you twenty subscribers to the children's paper," replied the dyer, still rather pale.

"That being the case," said Gaudissart, "why should we not breakfast together? Men who have fought are always ready to understand each other."

"Monsieur Mitouflet," said Gaudissart, as they went in, "there is a bailiff here, I suppose?"

"What for?"

"I mean to serve a notice on my dear little Monsieur Margaritis, requiring him to supply me with two casks of his wine."

"But he has none," said Vernier.

"Well, monsieur, I will say no more about it for an indemnity of twenty francs. But I will not have it said in your town that you stole a march on Gaudissart the Great."

Madame Margaritis, afraid of an action, which the plaintiff would certainly gain, brought the twenty francs to the clement drummer, who was also spared the pains of any further propaganda in one of the most jovial districts of France, and at the same time the least open to new ideas.

On his return from his tour in the southern provinces, Gaudissart the Great was traveling in the coupé of the Laffite-Caillard diligence, and had for a fellow-passenger a young man to whom, having passed Angoulême, he condescended to expatiate on the mysteries of life, fancying him, no doubt, but a baby.

On reaching Vouvray, the youth exclaimed—

"What a lovely situation!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "but the land is uninhabitable by reason of the inhabitants. You would have a duel on your hands every day. Why, only three months ago I fought on that very spot"—and he pointed to the bridge—"with a confounded dyer—pistols; but—I fleeced him!"

PARIS, *November*, 1832.

[*Note.*—The book "Parisians in the Country" consists of "Gaudissart the Great" and the "Muse of the Department." As they are not related to each other they are, for mechanical reasons, placed in separate volumes.—PUB.]

BÉATRIX
THE PURSE

PREFACE.

"BEATRIX" was built up in the odd fashion in which Balzac sometimes did build up his novels, and which may be thought to account for an occasional lack of unity and grasp in them. The original book, written in 1838, and published with the rather flowery dedication "to Sarah" at the end of that year, stopped at the marriage of Calyste and Sabine. The last part, separately entitled "Un Adultère Rétrospectif," was not added till six years later. It cannot be said to be either very shocking or very unnatural that the young husband should exemplify the truth of that uncomfortable proverb, *Qui a bu boira;* and it is perhaps rather more surprising that Balzac should have allowed him to be "refished" (as the French say) in a finally satisfactory condition by his lawful spouse.

Still, I do not think the addition can be considered on the whole an improvement to the book, of which it is at the best rather an appendix than an integral part. The conception of Beatrix herself seems to have changed somewhat, and that not as the conception of her immortal namesake in "Esmond" and "The Virginians" changes, merely to suit the irreparable outrage of years. The end has unsavory details, which have not, as the repetition of them in more tragic form a little later in "La Cousine Bette" has, the justification of a really tragic retribution; and a man must have a great deal of disinterested good-nature about him to feel any satisfaction, or indeed to take much interest, in the restoration of the domestic happiness of two such persons as M. and Madame de Rochefide. Calyste du Guénic, whose character was earlier rather exaggerated, is now almost a caricature, and to me at least the thing is not much excused by the fact that it gives Balzac an opportunity of introducing his pattern gentleman-scoundrel,

Maxime de Trailles, and his pet Bohemian, La Palférine. The many-named Italian here indeed plays a comparatively benevolent part, as does Trailles; but they are both as great "raffs" and "tigers" as ever.

The first and larger part of the book, on the other hand—the book proper, as we may call it—is a remarkable, a well-designed, and a very interesting study. It is not so much of an additional attraction to me, as it perhaps is to most people, that contemporaries, without much contradiction, or in all cases improbability, chose to regard the parts and personages of Félicité des Touches, Beatrix de Rochefide, Claud Vignon, and the musician Conti, as designed, and pretty closely designed, after George Sand, Madame d'Agoult (known as "Daniel Stern"), Gustave Planche, the critic, and Liszt. As to the first pair, there can, of course, be no doubt; for Balzac, by representing "Camille Maupin" as George Sand's rival, and by introducing divers ingenious and legitimate adaptations of the famous she-novelist's career, both invites and, in a way, authorizes the attribution. There is nothing offensive in it; indeed, Félicité is one of the most effective and sympathetic of his female characters, and would always have been incapable of the rather heartless action by which the actual George Sand amused herself intellectually and sentimentally with lover after lover, and then threw them away. Unless the accounts of Planche that we have are very unfair—and they possibly are, for he was a critic, and was particularly obnoxious to the extreme Romantic school, which was perhaps why Balzac liked him—Claud Vignon is a still more flattered portrait, though Balzac's low, if not quite impartial, opinion of critics in general comes out in it. Conti may be fair enough for Liszt; and if Beatrix is certainly a libel on poor Madame d'Agoult, it must be remembered that this later Madame de Staël was generally misrepresented in her lifetime, though since her death she has had more justice.

The "key"-interest of books, however, is always a minor,

and sometimes a purely illegitimate one. It ought to be sufficient for us that the interest of the quartette, even if there had been no such persons as George Sand, Daniel Stern, Planche, and Liszt in the world, would be very great, and that it is well composed with and maintained by the accessory and auxiliary facts and characters. The picture of the Guénic household (which, after Balzac's usual fashion, throws us back to "Les Chouans," while Beatrix as a Casteran, and thus a connection of the luckless Mlle. de Verneuil, is also connected with that book) may seem to some to be a little too fully painted; it does not seem so to me. Whether, as hinted above, the character of Calyste has its childishness exaggerated or not, I must leave to readers to decide for themselves. His casting of Beatrix into the sea, beside being illegal, may seem to some extravagant; but it must be remembered that Balzac was originally writing when the heyday of the Romantic movement was by no means over, and when melodrama was still pretty fully in fashion. It is difficult, too, to see what better contrast and uniting scheme for the contrasted worldlinesses of the four chief characters could have been devised; while the childishness itself is not inconceivable or unnatural in a boy brought up in a sort of household of romance by a heroic father and a doting mother, both utterly unworldly, his head being further fired by participation in actual civil war on behalf of an injured princess, and his heart exposed without preparation to such different influences as those of Mlle. des Touches and of Beatrix.

The contrast of the two ladies is also fine; indeed, Beatrix seems to me, though by no means Balzac's most perfect work, to be an attempt in a higher style of novel writing than any other heroine of his. It is impossible not to suspect in Félicité, good, clever, and so forth as she is, a covert satire on the variety of womankind which had begun to be fashionable. The satire on the unamiable side of mere womanliness which the sketch of Beatrix contains is, of course, open and un-

deniable. I think that Thackeray has far excelled it, but I am not certain that he was not indebted to it as a pattern. The fault of the French Beatrix has been expressed by her creator on nearly the last page of the book. A woman *sans cœur ni tête* may do a great deal of mischief; but she cannot quite play the part attributed to Madame de Rochefide.

The two first parts of "Beatrix" (in which Madame de Rochefide was at first called Roche*gude*) appeared in the "Siècle" during April and May, 1839, with the alternative title "ou les Amours Forcés," and they were published in book form by Souverain in the same year. They were then divided briefly: the first part, which was called "Moeurs D'Autrefois" in the "Siècle," and "Une Famille Patriarcale" in the book, had eight headed chapters; the second ("Moeurs D'Aujourdhui" in the first, "Une Femme Célèbre" in the second) eleven; and a third division, "Les Rivalités," eight. As a "Scène de la Vie Privée," which it became in 1842, it had no chapters; it was little altered otherwise; and the present completion was anticipated, though not given, in a final paragraph. It also had the simple title of "Beatrix." The completion itself did not appear till the midwinter (December-January) of 1844–45. It was first called "Les Petits Manèges d'une Femme Vertueuse" in the "Messager," and when, shortly afterward, it was published by Chlendowski as a book, "La Lune de Miel." In these forms it had fifty-nine headed chapters. In the same year, however, it became, with its forerunners, part of the Comédie, and the chapters were swept away throughout.

"The Purse" ("La Bourse"), though agreeable, is a little slight. It was early written, apparently for the second edition of the "Scènes de la Vie Privée," in which it appeared. In 1835 it was moved over to the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne," between which and the Vie Privée there is in fact a good deal of cross and arbitrary division. But when the full Comédie took shape it moved back again. G. S.

BEATRIX.

To Sarah.

In clear weather, on the Mediterranean shore, where formerly your name held elegant sway, the waves sometimes allow us to perceive beneath the mist of waters a sea-flower, one of Nature's masterpieces; the lacework of its tissue, tinged with purple, russet, rose, violet, or gold, the crispness of that living filigree, the velvet texture, all vanish as soon as curiosity draws it forth and spreads it on the strand.

Thus would the glare of publicity offend your tender modesty; so, in dedicating this work to you, I must reserve a name which would, indeed, be its pride. But, under the shelter of this half-concealment, your superb hands may bless it, your noble brow may bend and dream over it, your eyes, full of motherly love, may smile upon it, since you are here at once present and veiled. Like that gem of the ocean-garden, you will dwell on the fine, white, level sand where your beautiful life expands, hidden by a wave that is transparent only to certain friendly and reticent eyes.

I would gladly have laid at your feet a work in harmony with your perfections; but as that was impossible, I knew, for my consolation, that I was gratifying one of your instincts by offering you something to protect.

DE BALZAC.

PART I.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FRANCE, and more especially Brittany, still has some few towns that stand entirely outside the social movement which gives a character to the nineteenth century. For lack of rapid and constant communications with Paris, connected only by an ill-made road with the prefecture or chief town to which they belong, these places hear and see modern civilization pass by like a spectacle; they are amazed, but they do not applaud; and whether they fear it or make light of it, they remain faithful to the antiquated manners of which they preserve the stamp. Any one who should travel as a moral archæologist, and study men instead of stones, might find a picture of the age of Louis XV. in some village of Provence, that of the time of Louis XIV. in the depths of Poitou, that of yet remoter ages in the heart of Brittany.

Most of these places have fallen from some splendor of which history has kept no record, busied as it is with facts and dates rather than manners, but of which the memory still survives in tradition; as in Brittany, where the character of the people allows no forgetfulness of anything that concerns the home country. Many of these towns have been the capital of some little feudal territory—a county or a duchy conquered by the Crown, or broken up by inheritors in default of a direct male line. Then, deprived of their activity, these heads became arms; the arms, bereft of nutrition, have dried up and merely vegetate; and within these thirty years these images of remote times are beginning to die out and grow very rare.

Modern industry, toiling for the masses, goes on destroying the creations of ancient art, for its outcome was as personal to the purchaser as to the maker. We have *products* nowadays; we no longer have works. Buildings play a large part in

the phenomena of retrospection; but to industry buildings are stone-quarries or saltpetre mines, or warehouses for cotton. A few years more and these primitive towns will be transformed, known no more except in this literary iconography.

One of the towns where the physiognomy of the feudal ages is still most plainly visible is Guérande. The name alone will revive a thousand memories in the mind of painters, artists, and thinkers, who may have been to the coast and have seen this noble gem of feudality proudly perched where it commands the sand-hills and the strand at low tide, the top corner, as it were, of a triangle at whose other points stand two not less curious relics—le Croisic and le Bourg de Batz. Beside Guérande there are but two places—Vitré, in the very centre of Brittany, and Avignon, in the south—which preserve their mediæval aspect and features in the midst of our century. Guérande is to this day inclosed by mighty walls, its wide moats are full of water, its battlements are unbroken, its loopholes are not filled up with shrub, the ivy has thrown no mantle over its round and square towers. It has three gates, where the rings may still be seen for suspending the portcullis; it is entered over drawbridges of timber shod with iron, which could be raised, though they are raised no longer. The municipality was blamed in 1820 for planting poplars by the side of the moat to shade the walk; it replied that on the land side, by the sand-hills, for above a hundred years, the fine long esplanade by the walls, which look as if they had been built yesterday, had been made into a mall overshadowed by elms, where the inhabitants took their pleasure.

The houses have known no changes; they are neither more nor less in number. Not one of them has felt on its face the hammer of the builder or the brush of the whitewasher, nor trembled under the weight of an added story. They all retain their primitive character. Some are raised on wooden columns forming "rows," under which there is a footway, floored with planks that yield but do not break. The store-

dwellings are small and low, and faced with slate shingles. Woodwork, now decayed, has been largely used for carved window-frames; and the beams, prolonged beyond the pillars, project in grotesque heads, or at the angles, in the form of fantastic creatures, vivified by the great idea of art, which at that time lent life to dead matter. These ancient things, defying the touch of time, offer to painters the brown tones and obliterated lines that they delight in.

The streets are what they were a hundred years ago. Only, as the population is thinner now, as the social stir is less active, a traveler curious to wander through this town, as fine as a perfect suit of antique armor, may find his way, not untouched by melancholy, down an almost deserted street, where the stone window-frames are choked with concrete to avoid the tax. This street ends at a postern-gate built up with a stone-wall, and crowned by a clump of saplings planted there by the hand of Breton Nature—France can hardly show a more luxuriant and all-pervading vegetation. If he is a poet or a painter, our wanderer will sit down, absorbed in the enjoyment of the perfect silence that reigns under the still sharp-cut vaulting of this side-gate, whither no sound comes from the peaceful town, whence the rich country may be seen in all its beauty through loopholes, once held by archers and cross-bowmen, which seem placed like the little windows arranged to frame a view from a summer-house.

It is impossible to go through the town without being reminded at every step of the manners and customs of long past times; every stone speaks of them; traditions of the Middle Ages survive there as superstitions. If by chance a gendarme passes in his laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which the mind protests; but nothing is rarer than to meet a being or a thing of the present. There is little to be seen even of the dress of the day; so much of it as the natives have accepted has become to some extent appropriate to their unchanging habits and hereditary physiognomy. The market-

place is filled with Breton costumes, which artists come here to study, and which are amazingly varied. The whiteness of the linen clothes worn by the *paludiers*, the salt-workers who collect salt from the pans in the marshes, contrasts effectively with the blues and browns worn by the inland peasants, and the primitive jewelry piously preserved by the women. These two classes and the jacketed seamen, with their round, varnished leather hats, are as distinct as the castes in India, and they still recognize the distinctions that separate the townsfolk, the clergy, and the nobility. Here every landmark still exists; the revolutionary plane found the divisions too rugged and too hard to work over; it would have been notched if not broken. Here the immutability which nature has given to zoological species is to be seen in men. In short, even since the revolution of 1830, Guérande is still a place unique, essentially Breton, fervently Catholic, silent, meditative, where new ideas can scarcely penetrate.

Its geographical position accounts for this singularity. This pretty town overlooks the salt marshes; its salt is indeed known throughout Brittany as *Sel de Guérande*, and to its merits many of the natives ascribe the excellence of their butter and sardines. It has no communication with the rest of France but by two roads, one leading to Savenay, the chief town of the immediate district, and thence to Saint-Nazaire; and the other by Vannes on to Morbihan. The district road connects it with Nantes by land; that by Saint-Nazaire and then by boat also leads to Nantes. The inland road is used only by the Government, the shorter and more frequented way is by Saint-Nazaire. Between that town and Guérande lies a distance of at least six leagues, which the mails do not serve, and for a very good reason—there are not three travelers by coach a year. Saint-Nazaire is divided from Paimbœuf by the estuary of the Loire, there four leagues in width. The bar of the river makes the navigation by steamboat somewhat uncertain; and, to add to the difficulties, there was, in 1829, no

landing quay at the cape of Saint-Nazaire; the point ended in slimy shoals and granite reefs, the natural fortifications of its picturesque church, compelling arriving voyagers to fling themselves and their baggage into boats when the sea was high, or, in fine weather, to walk across the rocks as far as the jetty then in course of construction. These obstacles, ill suited to invite the amateur, may perhaps still exist there. In the first place, the authorities move but slowly; and then the natives of this corner of land, which you may see projecting like a tooth on the map of France between Saint-Nazaire, le Bourg de Batz, and le Croisic, are very well content with the hindrances that protect their territory from the incursions of strangers.

Thus flung down on the edge of a continent, Guérande leads no whither, and no one ever comes there. Happy in being unknown, the town cares only for itself. The centre of the immense produce of the salt marshes, paying not less than a million francs in taxes, is at le Croisic, a peninsular town communicating with Guérande across a tract of shifting sands, where the road traced each day is washed out each night, and by boats indispensable for crossing the inlet, which forms the port of le Croisic, and which encroaches on the sand. Thus this charming little town is a Herculaneum of feudalism, minus the winding-sheet of lava. It stands, but is not alive; its only reason for surviving is that it has not been pulled down.

If you arrive at Guérande from le Croisic, after crossing the tract of salt marshes, you are startled and excited at the sight of this immense fortification, apparently quite new. Coming on it from Saint-Nazaire, its picturesque position and the rural charm of the neighborhood are no less fascinating. The country round it is charming, the hedges full of flowers—honeysuckles, roses, and beautiful shrubs; you might fancy it was an English wild-garden planned by a great artist. This rich landscape, so homelike, so little visited, with all the

charm of a clump of violets or lily-of-the-valley found in the midst of a forest, is set in an African desert shut in by the ocean—a desert without a tree, without a blade of grass, without a bird, where, on a sunny day, the marshmen, dressed all in white, and scattered at wide intervals over the dismal flats where the salt is collected, look just like Arabs wrapped in their burnouse. Indeed, Guérande, with its pretty scenery inland, and its desert bounded on the right by le Croisic and on the left by Batz, is quite unlike anything else to be seen by the traveler in France. The two types of nature so strongly contrasted and linked by this last monument of feudal life are quite indescribably striking. The town itself has the effect on the mind that a soporific has on the body; it is as soundless as Venice.

There is no public conveyance but that of a carrier who transports travelers, parcels, and possibly letters, in a wretched vehicle, from Saint-Nazaire to Guérande or back again. Bernus, the driver of this conveyance, was, in 1829, the factotum of the whole community. He goes as he likes, the whole country knows him, he does everybody's commissions. The arrival of a carriage is an immense event—some lady who is passing through Guérande by the land road to le Croisic, or a few old invalids on their way to take sea-baths, which among the rocks of this peninsula have virtues superior to those of Boulogne, Dieppe, or les Sables. The peasants come on horseback, and for the most part bring in their produce in sacks. They come hither chiefly, as do the salt-makers, for the business of purchasing the jewelry peculiar to their caste, which must always be given to Breton maidens on betrothal, and the white linen or the cloth for their clothes. For ten leagues round, Guérande is still that illustrious Guérande where a treaty was signed famous in French history; the key of the coast, displaying no less than le Bourg de Batz a magnificence now lost in the darkness of ages. The jewelry, the cloth, the linen, the ribbons, and hats are manufactured else-

where, but to the purchasers they are the specialty of Guérande.

Every artist, nay, and every one who is not an artist, who passes through Guérande, feels a desire—soon forgotten—to end his days in its peace and stillness, walking out in fine weather on the mall that runs round the town from one gate to the other on the seaward side. Now and again a vision of this town comes to knock at the gates of memory; it comes in crowned with towers, belted with walls; it displays its robe strewn with lovely flowers, shakes its mantle of sand-hills, wafts the intoxicating perfumes of its pretty thorn-hedged lanes, decked with posies lightly flung together; it fills your mind, and invites you like some divine woman whom you have once seen in a foreign land, and who has made herself a home in your heart.

Close to the church of Guérande a house may be seen which is to the town what the town is to the country, an exact image of the past, the symbol of a great thing now gone, a poem. This house belongs to the noblest family in the land—that of du Guaisnic, who, in the time of the du Guesclin, were as superior to them in fortune and antiquity as the Trojans were to the Romans. The Guaisqlain (also formerly spelt du Glaicquin)—which has become Guesclin—are descended from the Guaisnics. The Guaisnics, as old as the granite of Brittany, are neither Franks nor Gauls; they are Bretons, or, to be exact, Celts. Of old they must have been Druids, have cut the mistletoe in sacred groves, and have sacrificed men on dolmens. To-day this race, the equals of the Rohans, but never chosing to be made princes, powerful in the land before Hugues Capet's ancestors had been heard of, this family, pure from every alloy, is possessed of about two thousand francs a year, this house at Guérande, and the little Castle of le Guaisnic. All the estates belonging to the Barony of le Guaisnic, the oldest in Brittany, are in the

hands of farmers, and bring in about sixty thousand francs a year in spite of defective culture. The du Guaisnics are indeed still the owners of the land; but as they cannot pay up the capital deposited with them two hundred years ago by those who then held them, they cannot take the income. They are in the position of the French Crown toward its tenants in 1789. When and where could the barons find the million francs handed over to them by their farmers? Until 1789 the tenure of the fiefs held of the Castle of le Guaisnic, which stands on a hill, was still worth fifty thousand francs; but by a single vote the National Assembly suppressed the fines on leases and sales paid to the feudal lords. In such circumstances, this family, no longer of any consequence in France, would be a subject of ridicule in Paris; at Guérande, it is an epitome of Brittany. At Guérande, the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, one of the men above whom there is but one—the King of France, chosen of old to be their chief. In these days the name of du Guaisnic—full of local meanings, of which the etymology has been explained in "Les Chouans or Brittany in 1799"—has undergone the same change as disfigures that of du Guaisqlain. The tax-collector, like every one else, writes it Guénic.

At the end of a silent, damp, and gloomy alley, formed by the gabled fronts of the neighboring houses, the arch of a door in the wall may be seen, high and wide enough to admit a horseman, which is in itself sufficient evidence of the house having been finished at a time when carriages as yet were not. This arch, raised on jambs, is all of granite. The door, made of oak, has cracked like the bark of the trees that furnished the timber, and is set with enormous nails in a geometrical pattern. The arch is coved, and displays the coat-of-arms of the du Guaisnics, as sharp and clean-cut as though the carver had but just finished it. This shield would delight an amateur of heraldry by its simplicity, testifying to the pride and

the antiquity of the family. It is still the same as on the day when the crusaders of the Christian world invented these symbols to know each other by; the Guaisnics have never quartered their bearings with any others. It is always true to itself, like the arms of France, which heralds may recognize borne in chief or quarterly in the coats of the oldest families. This is the blazon, as you still may see it at Guérande: Gules, a hand proper manched ermine holding a sword argent in pale, with this tremendous motto, *Fac.* Is not that a fine and great thing? The wreath of the baronial coronet surmounts this simple shield, on which the vertical lines, used, instead of color, to represent *gules*, are still clear and sharp.

The sculptor has given an indescribable look of pride and chivalry to the hand. With what vigor does it hold the sword which has done the family service only yesterday! Indeed, if you should go to Guérande after reading this story, you will not look at that coat-of-arms without a thrill. The most determined Republican cannot fail to be touched by the fidelity, the nobleness, and the dignity buried at the bottom of that narrow street. The du Guaisnics did well yesterday; they are ready to do well to-morrow. "To do" is the great word of chivalry. "You did well in the fight" was always the praise bestowed by the High Constable *par excellence*, the great du Guesclin, who for a while drove the English out of France. The depth of the carving, protected from the weather by the projecting curved margin of the arch, seems in harmony with the deeply graven moral of the motto in the spirit of this family. To those who know the Guaisnics this peculiarity is very pathetic.

The open door reveals a fairly large courtyard with stables to the right and kitchen offices to the left. The house is built of squared stone from cellar to garret. The front to the courtyard has a double flight of outside steps; the decorated landing at the top is covered with vestiges of sculpture much injured by time; but the eye of the antiquarian can still dis-

tinguish in the centre-piece of the principal ornament the hand holding the sword. Below this elegant balcony, graced with mouldings now broken in many places, and polished here and there by long use, is a little lodge, once occupied by a watch-dog. The stone balustrade is disjointed, and weeds, tiny flowers, and mosses sprout in the seams and on the steps, which ages have dislodged without destroying their solidity. The door into the house must have been pretty in its day. So far as the remains allow us to judge, it must have been wrought by an artist trained in the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century; it shows a singular combination of the Mauresque and Byzantine styles, and is crowned by a semicircular bracket, which is overgrown with plants, a posy of rose, yellow, brown, or blue, according to the season. The door, of nail-studded oak, opens into a vast hall, beyond which is a similar door leading to such another balcony, and steps down into the garden.

This hall is in wonderful preservation. The wainscot, up to the height of a man's elbow, is in chestnut-wood; the walls above are covered with splendid Spanish leather stamped in relief, its gilding rubbed and rusty. The ceiling is coffered, artistically moulded, painted, and gilt, but the gold is scarcely visible; it is in the same condition as that on the cordova leather; a few red flowers and green leaves can still be seen. It seems probable that cleaning would revive the paintings and show them to be like those which decorate the woodwork of the House at Tours, called *la Maison de Tristan*, which would prove that they had been restored or repaired in the time of Louis XI. The fireplace is enormous, of carved stone, with huge wrought-iron dogs of the finest workmanship. They would carry a cartload of logs. All the seats in this hall are of oak, and have the family shield carved on their backs. Hanging to nails on the wall are three English muskets, fit alike for war or for sport, three cavalry swords, two game-bags, and various tackle for hunting and fishing.

On one side is the dining-room, communicating with the kitchen by a door in a corner turret. This turret corresponds with another in the general design of the front, containing a winding-stair up to the two stories above. The dining-room is hung with tapestries dating from the fourteenth century; the style and spelling of the legends on ribbons below each figure prove their antiquity; but as they are couched in the frank language of the *Fabliaux*,* they cannot be transcribed here. These pieces, which are well preserved in the corners where the light has not faded them, are set in frames of carved oak now as black as ebony. The ceiling is supported on beams carved with foliage, and all different; the flats between are of painted wood, wreaths of flowers on a blue ground. Two old dressers with cupboards face each other; and on the shelves, rubbed with Breton perseverance by Mariotte the cook, may be seen now—as at the time when kings were quite as poor in 1200 as the du Guaisnics in 1830—four old goblets, an ancient soup-tureen, and two salt-cellars in silver, a quantity of metal plates, a number of blue and gray stoneware pitchers with arabesque designs and the du Guaisnic arms, and crowned with hinged metal lids.

The fireplace has been modernized; its state shows that since the last century this has been the family sitting-room. It is of carved stone in the Louis XV. style, surmounted by a mirror framed in a beaded and gilt moulding. This anachronism, to which the family is indifferent, would grieve a poet. On the shelf, covered with red velvet, there stands in the middle a clock of tortoise-shell, inlaid with brass, flanked by a pair of silver candelabra of strange design. A large table on heavy twisted legs stands in the middle of the room; the chairs are of turned wood, covered with tapestry. A round-table with a centre leg and claw carved to represent a vine-stock stands in front of the window to the garden, and on it

* Ancient stories in verse.

stands a quaint lamp. This lamp is formed of a globe of common glass, rather smaller than an ostrich's egg, held in a candlestick by a glass knob at the bottom. From an opening at the top comes a flat wick in a sort of brass nozzle ; the plait of cotton, curled up like a worm in a phial, is fed with nut oil from the glass vessel. The window looking out on the garden, like that on the courtyard—for they are alike—has stone mullions and hexagon panes set in lead ; they are hung with curtains and valances, decorated with heavy tassels of an old-fashioned stuff—red silk shot with yellow, formerly known as brocatelle or damask.

Each floor of the house—there are but two below the attics —consists of only two rooms. The second floor was of old inhabited by the head of the family ; the third was given up to the children ; guests were lodged in the attic rooms. The servants were housed over the kitchens and stables. The sloping roof, leaded at every angle, has to the front and back alike a noble dormer window with a pointed arch, almost as high as the ridge of the roof, supported on graceful brackets ; but the carving of the stone is worn and eaten by the salt vapor of the atmosphere. Above the windows, divided into four by mullions of carved stone, the aristocratic weathercock still creaks as it veers.

A detail, precious by its originality and not devoid of merit in the eyes of the archæologist, must not be overlooked. The turret containing the winding stairs finishes the angle of a broad gabled wall in which there is no window. The stairs go down to a small arched door, opening on a sandy plot dividing the house from the outer wall which forms the back of the stables. The turret is repeated at the corner of the garden-front ; but, instead of being circular, this turret has five angles and a hemispherical dome ; also, it is crowned by a little belfry instead of carrying a conical cap like its sister. This is how those elegant architects lent variety to symmetry. On the level of the second floor these turrets are connected

by a stone balcony, supported by brackets like prows with human heads. This outside gallery has a balustrade wrought with marvelous elegance and finish. Then from the top of the gable, below which there is a single small loophole, falls an ornamental stone canopy, like those which are seen over the heads of saints in a cathedral porch. Each turret has a pretty little doorway under a pointed arch, opening on to this balcony. Thus did the architects of the thirteenth century turn to account the bare, cold wall which is presented to us in modern times by the end-section of a house.

Cannot you see a lady walking on this balcony in the morning and looking out over Guérande to where the sun sheds a golden light on the sands and is mirrored in the face of the ocean? Do you not admire this wall with its finial and gable, furnished at its corners with these reed-like turrets—one suddenly rounded off like a swallow's nest, the other displaying its little door and gothic arch decorated with the hand and sword?

The other end of the Hôtel du Guaisnic joins on to the next house.

The harmony of effect so carefully aimed at by the builders of that period is preserved in the front to the courtyard by the turret corresponding to that containing the winding stair or *vyse*, an old word derived from the French *vis*. It serves as a passage from the dining-room to the kitchen, but it ends at the second floor, and is capped by a little cupola on pillars covering a blackened statue of Saint Calixtus.

The garden is sumptuous within its ancient inclosure; it is more than half an acre in extent, and the walls are covered with fruit trees; the square beds for vegetables are marked out by standards, and kept by a manservant named Gasselin, who also takes charge of the horses. At the bottom of the garden is an arbor with a bench under it. In the midst stands a sundial. The paths are graveled.

The garden-front has no second turret to correspond with

that at the corner of the gable; to make up for this there is a column with a spiral twist from bottom to top, which of old must have borne the standard of the family, for it ends in a large rusty iron socket in which lank weeds are growing. This ornament, harmonizing with the remains of stonework, shows that the building was designed by a Venetian architect; this elegant standard is like a sign manual left by Venice, and revealing the chivalry and refinement of the thirteenth century. If there could still be any doubt, the character of the details would remove them. The trefoils of the Guaisnic house have four leaves. This variant betrays the Venetian school debased by its trade with the East, since the semi-Mauresque architects, indifferent to Catholic symbolism, gave the trefoil a fourth leaf, while Christian architects remained faithful to the emblem of the Trinity. From this point of view Venetian inventiveness was heretical.

If this house moves you to admiration, you will wonder, perhaps, why the present age never repeats these miracles of art. In our day such fine houses are sold and pulled down, and make way for streets. Nobody knows whether the next generation will keep up the ancestral home, where each one abides as in an inn; whereas formerly men labored, or at least believed that they labored, for an eternal posterity. Hence the beauty of their houses. Faith in themselves worked wonders, as much as faith in God.

With regard to the arrangement and furniture of the upper stories, they can only be imagined from this description of the first floor and from the appearance and habits of the family. For the last fifty years the du Guaisnics have never admitted a visitor into any room but these two, which, like the courtyard and the external features of the house, are redolent of the grace, the spirit, and originality of the noble province of old Brittany.

Without this topography and description of the town, without this detailed picture of their home, the singular figures of

the family dwelling there might have been less well understood. The frame was necessarily placed before the portraits. Every one must feel that mere things have an effect on people. There are buildings whose influence is visible on the persons who live near them. It is difficult to be irreligious under the shadow of a cathedral like that of Bourges. The soul that is constantly reminded of its destiny by imagery finds it less easy to fall short of it. So thought our ancestors, but the opinion is no longer held by a generation which has neither symbols nor distinctions, while its manners change every ten years. Do you not expect to find the Baron du Guaisnic, sword in hand—or all this picture will be false?

In 1836, when this drama opens, in the early days of August, the family consisted still of Monsieur and Madame du Guénic, of Mademoiselle du Guénic, the Baron's elder sister, and of a son aged one-and-twenty, named Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis, in obedience to an old custom in the family. His father's name was Gaudebert-Calyste-Charles. Only the last name was ever changed; Saint-Gaudebert and Saint-Calixtus were always the patrons of the Guénics.

The Baron du Guénic had gone forth from Guérande as soon as la Vendée and Brittany had taken up arms, and he had fought with Charette, with Catelineau, la Rochejaquelein, d'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the Prince de Loudon. Before going, he had sold all his possessions to his elder sister, Mademoiselle Zéphirine du Guénic, a stroke of prudence unique in Revolutionary annals. After the death of all the heroes of the West, the Baron, preserved by some miracle from ending as they did, would not yield to Napoleon. He fought on till 1802, when, having narrowly escaped capture, he came back to Guérande, and from Guérande went to le Croisic, whence he sailed to Ireland—faithful to the traditional hatred of the Bretons for England.

The good people of Guérande pretended not to know that

the Baron was alive; during twenty years not a word betrayed him. Mademoiselle du Guénic collected the rents, and sent the money to her brother through the hands of fishermen.

In 1813, Monsieur du Guénic came back to Guérande with as little fuss as if he had been spending the summer at Nantes. During his sojourn in Dublin, in spite of his fifty years, the Breton noble had fallen in love with a charming Irish girl, the daughter of one of the oldest and poorest houses of that unhappy country. Miss Fanny O'Brien was at that time one-and-twenty. The Baron du Guénic came to fetch the papers needed for his marriage, went back to be married, and returned ten months later, at the beginning of 1814, with his wife, who gave birth to a son on the very day when Louis XVIII. landed at Calais—which accounts for the name of Louis.

The loyal old man was now seventy-three years old, but the guerilla warfare against the Republic, his sufferings during five sea-voyages in open boats, and his life at Dublin, had all told on him; he looked more than a hundred. Hence, never had there been a Guénic whose appearance was in more perfect harmony with the antiquity of the house built at a time when a court was held at Guérande.

Monsieur du Guénic was a tall old man, upright, shriveled, strongly knit and lean. His oval face was puckered by a thousand wrinkles, forming arched fringes above the cheek-bones and eyebrows, giving his face some resemblance to those of the old men painted with such a loving brush by Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Miéris, and Gerard Dow—heads that need a magnifying glass to show their finish. His countenance was buried, as it were, under these numerous furrows produced by an open-air life, by the habit of scanning the horizon in the sunshine, at sunrise, and at the fall of day. But the sympathetic observer could still discern the imperishable forms of the human face, which always speak to the soul even when

the eye sees no more than a death's head. The firm modeling of the features, the high brow, the sternness of outline, the severe nose, the form of the bones which wounds alone can alter, expressed disinterested courage, boundless faith, implicit obedience, incorruptible fidelity, unchanging affection. In him the granite of Brittany was made man.

The Baron had no teeth. His lips, once red, but now blue, were supported only by the hardened gums with which he ate the bread his wife took care first to soften by wrapping it in a damp cloth, and they were sunk in his face while preserving a proud and threatening smile. His chin aimed at touching his nose; but the character of that nose—high in the middle—showed his Breton vigor and power of resistance. His complexion, marbled with red that showed through the wrinkles, was that of a full-blooded, high-tempered man, able to endure the fatigues which had often, no doubt, saved him from apoplexy. The head was crowned with hair as white as silver, falling in curls on his shoulders. His face, that seemed partly extinct, still lived by the brightness of a pair of black eyes, sparkling in their dark, sunken sockets, and flashing with the last fires of a generous and loyal soul. The eyebrows and eyelashes were gone. The skin had set, and would not yield; the difficulty of shaving compelled the old man to grow a fan-shaped beard.

What a painter would most have admired in this old lion of Brittany, with his broad shoulders and sinewy breast, was the hands, splendid soldier's hands—hands such as du Guesclin's must have been, broad, firm, and hairy; the hands that had seized the sword never to relinquish it—any more than Jeanne d'Arc's—till the day when the royal standard floated in the Cathedral at Reims; hands that had often streamed with blood from the thorns of the *Bocage*—the thickets of la Vendée—that had pulled the oar in the Marais to steal upon the "blues," or on the open sea to help Georges to land; the hands of a partisan and of a gunner, of a private and of a

captain; hands that were now white, though the Bourbons of the elder branch were in exile; but if you looked at them, you could see certain recent marks revealing that the Baron, not so long ago, had joined MADAME in la Vendée, since the truth may now be told. These hands were a living commentary on the noble motto to which no Guénic had ever been false, "*Fac!*"

The forehead attracted attention by the golden tone on the temples, in contrast with the tan of that narrow, hard, set brow to which baldness had given height enough to add majesty to the noble ruin. The whole countenance, somewhat unintellectual it must be owned—and how should it be otherwise?—had, like the other Breton faces grouped about it, a touch of savagery, a stolid calm, like the impassibility of Huron Indians, an indescribable stupidity, due perhaps to the complete reaction that follows on excessive fatigue when the animal alone is left evident. Thought was rare there; it was visibly an effort; its seat was in the heart rather than the head; and its outcome was action rather than an idea. But on studying this fine old man with sustained attention, the mystery could be detected of this practical antagonism to the spirit of the age. His feelings and beliefs were, so to speak, intuitive, and saved him all thought. He had learned his duties by dint of living. Religion and institutions thought for him. Hence he and his kindred reserved their powers of mind for action, without frittering them on any of the things they thought useless, though others considered them important. He brought his thought out of his mind as he drew his sword from the scabbard, dazzling with rectitude like the hand in its ermine sleeve on his coat-of-arms. As soon as this secret was understood everything was clear. It explained the depth of the resolutions due to clear, definite, loyal ideas, as immaculate as ermine. It accounted for the sale to his sister before the war, though to him it had meant everything —death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of these two old

persons' characters—for the sister lived only in and for her brother—cannot be fully appreciated by the selfish habits which lie at the root of the uncertainty and changefulness of our day. An archangel sent down to read their hearts would not have found in them a single thought bearing the stamp of self. In 1814, when the priest of Guérande hinted to Baron du Guénic that he should go to Paris to claim his reward, the old sister, though avaricious for the family, exclaimed—

"Shame! Need my brother go begging like a vagrant?"

"It would be supposed that I had served the King from interested motives," said the old man. "Beside, it is his business to remember. And, after all, the poor King has enough to do with all who are harassing him. If he were to give France away piecemeal, he would still be asked for more."

This devoted servant, who cared so loyally for Louis XVIII., received a colonelcy, the cross of Saint-Louis, and a pension of two thousand francs.

"The King has remembered!" he exclaimed, on receiving his letters patent.

No one undeceived him. The business had been carried through by the Duc de Feltre from the lists of the Army of la Vendée, in which he found the name of du Guénic with a few other Breton names ending in *ic*.

And so, in gratitude to the King, the Baron stood a siege at Guérande in 1815 against the forces of General Travot; he would not surrender the stronghold; and when he was compelled to evacuate, he made his escape into the woods with a party of Chouans, who remained under arms till the second return of the Bourbons. Guérande still preserves the memory of this last siege. If the old Breton trainbands had but joined, the war begun by this heroic resistance would have fired the whole of la Vendée.

It must be confessed that the Baron du Guénic was

wholly illiterate—as illiterate as a peasant; he could read, write, and knew a little of arithmetic; he understood the art of war and heraldry; but he had not read three books in his life beside his prayer-book.

His dress, a not unimportant detail, was always the same; it consisted of heavy shoes, thick woolen stockings, velvet breeches of a greenish hue, a cloth vest, and a coat with a high collar, on which hung the cross of Saint-Louis.

Beautiful peace rested on this countenance, which, for a year past, frequent slumber, the precursor of death, seemed to be preparing for eternal rest. This constant sleepiness, increasing day by day, did not distress his wife, nor his now blind sister, nor his friends, whose medical knowledge was not great. To them these solemn pauses of a blameless but weary soul were naturally accounted for—the Baron had done his duty. This told all.

In this house the predominant interest centred in the fate of the deposed elder branch. The future of the exiled Bourbons and the Catholic religion, and the influence of the new politics on Brittany, exclusively absorbed the Baron's family. No other interest mingled with these but the affection they all felt for the son of the house, Calyste, the heir and only hope of the great name of du Guénic. The old Vendéen, the old Chouan, had shown a sort of renewal of his youth a few years since, to give his son the habit of those athletic exercises that befit a gentleman who may be called upon to fight at any moment. As soon as Calyste reached the age of sixteen, his father had gone out with him in the woods and marshes, teaching him by the pleasures of sport the rudiments of war, preaching by example, resisting fatigue, steadfast in the saddle, sure of his aim, whatever the game might be, ground game or birds, reckless in overcoming obstacles, inciting his son to face danger as though he had ten children to spare.

Then, when the Duchesse de Berry came to France to

conquer the kingdom, the father carried off his son to make him act on the family motto. The Baron set out in the night without warning his wife, who might perhaps have displayed her emotion, leading his only child under fire as if it were to a festival, and followed by Gasselin, his only vassal, who rode forth gleefully. The three men of the house were away for six months, without sending any news to the Baroness—who never read the "Quotidienne" without quaking over every line—nor to her old sister-in-law, heroically upright, whose brow never flinched as she listened to the paper. So the three muskets hanging in the hall had seen service recently. The Baron, in whose opinion this call to arms was unavailing, had left the field before the fight at La Penissière, otherwise the noble race of Guénic might have become extinct.

When, one night of dreadful weather, the father, son, and serving-man had reached home after taking leave of MADAME, surprising their friends, the Baroness and old Mademoiselle du Guénic—though she, by a gift bestowed on all blind people, had recognized the steps of three men in the little street—the Baron looked around on the circle of his anxious friends gathered around the little table lighted up by the antique lamp, and merely said, in a quavering voice, while Gasselin hung up the muskets and swords in their place, these words of feudal simplicity—

"Not all the Barons did their duty."

Then he kissed his wife and sister, sat down in his old armchair, and ordered supper for his son, himself, and Gasselin. Gasselin, having screened Calyste with his body, had received a sabre cut on his shoulder; such a small matter, that he was scarcely thanked for it.

Neither the Baron nor his guests uttered a curse or a word of abuse of the conquerors. This taciturnity is a characteristically Breton trait. In forty years no one had ever heard a contemptuous speech from the Baron as to his adversaries.

They could but do their business, as he did his duty. Such stern silence is an indication of immutable determination.

This last struggle, the flicker of exhausted powers, had resulted in the weakness under which the Baron was now failing. The second exile of the Bourbons, as miraculously ousted as they had been miraculously restored, plunged him in bitter melancholy.

At about six in the evening, on the day when the scene opens, the Baron, who, according to old custom, had done his dinner by four o'clock, had gone to sleep while listening to the reading of the "Quotidienne." His head rested against the back of his armchair by the fireside, at the garden end.

The Baroness, sitting on one of the old chairs in front of the fire, by the side of this gnarled trunk of an ancient tree, was of the type of those adorable women which exist nowhere but in England, Scotland, or Ireland. There only do we find girls kneaded with milk, golden-haired, with curls twined by angels' fingers, for the light of heaven seems to ripple over their tendrils with every air that fans them. Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, strong in tenderness, invincible in misfortune, as sweet as the music of her voice, as pure as the blue of her eyes, elegantly lovely and refined, with the prettiness and the exquisite flesh—satin to the touch and a joy to the eye—that neither pencil nor pen can do justice to. Beautiful still at forty-two, many a man would have been happy to marry her as he looked at the charms of this glorious, richly toned autumn, full of flower and fruit, and renewed by dews from heaven. The Baroness held the newspaper in a hand soft with dimples, and turned-up finger-tips with squarely cut nails like those of an antique statue. She leaned back in her chair, without awkwardness or affectation, her feet thrust forward to get warm; and she wore a black velvet dress, for the wind had turned cold these last few days. The bodice, fitting

tight to the throat, covered shoulders of noble outline and a bosom which had suffered no disfigurement from having nursed an only child. Her hair fell in ringlets on each side of her face, close to her cheeks, in the English fashion; a simple twist on the top of her head was held by a tortoise-shell comb; and the mass, instead of being of a doubtful hue, glittered in the light like threads of brownish gold. She had made a plait of the loose short hairs that grow low down and are a mark of fine breeding. This tiny tress, lost in the rest of her hair that was combed high on her head, allowed the eye to note with pleasure the flowing line from her neck to her beautiful shoulders. This little detail shows the care she always gave to her toilet. She persisted in charming the old man's eye. What a delightful and touching attention!

When you see a woman lavishing in her home-life the care for appearance which other women find for one feeling only, you may be sure that she is a noble mother, as she is a noble wife, the joy and flower of the household; she understands her duties as a woman, the elegance of her appearance dwells in her soul and her affections, she does good in secret, she knows how to love truly without ulterior motives, she loves her neighbor as she loves God, for himself. And it really seemed as though the Virgin in paradise, under whose protection she lived, had rewarded her chaste girlhood and saintly womanhood by the side of the noble old man by throwing over her a sort of glory that preserved her from the ravages of time.

Plato would perhaps have honored the fading of her beauty as so much added grace. Her skin, once so white, had acquired those warm and pearly tones that painters delight in. Her forehead, broad and finely moulded, seemed to love the light that played on it with sheeny touches. Her eyes of turquoise-blue gleamed with wonderful softness under light velvety lashes. The drooping lids and pathetic temples suggested some unspeakable, silent melancholy; below the eyes her cheeks were dead white, faintly veined with blue to the

bridge of the nose. The nose, aquiline and thin, had a touch of royal dignity, a reminder of her noble birth. Her lips, pure and delicately cut, were graced by a smile, the natural outcome of inexhaustible good humor. Her teeth were small and white. She had grown a little stout, but her shapely hips and slender waist were not disfigured by it; the autumn of her beauty displayed still some bright flowers forgotten by spring and the warmer glories of summer. Her finely moulded arms, her smooth lustrous skin had gained a finer texture; the forms had filled out. And her open, serene countenance, with its faint color, the purity of her blue eyes, to which too rude a gaze would have been an offense, expressed unchanging gentleness, the infinite tenderness of the angels.

At the other side of the fireplace, in another armchair, sat the old sister of eighty, in every particular but dress the exact image of her brother; she listened to the paper while knitting stockings, for which sight is not needed. Her eyes were darkened by cataract, and she obstinately refused to be operated on, in spite of her sister-in-law's entreaties. She alone knew the secret motive of her determination; she ascribed it to lack of courage, but in fact she did not choose that twenty-five louis should be spent on her; there would have been so much less in the house. Nevertheless, she would have liked to see her brother again. These two old people were an admirable foil to the Baroness' beauty. What woman would not have seemed young and handsome between Monsieur du Guénic and his sister?

Mademoiselle Zéphirine, deprived of sight, knew nothing of the changes that her eighty years had wrought in her looks. Her pallid, hollow face, to which the fixity of her white and sightless eyes gave a look of death, while three or four projecting teeth added an almost threatening expression; in which the deep eye-sockets were circled with red lines, and a few manly hairs, long since white, were visible on the chin and lips—this cold, calm face was framed in a little brown

cotton hood quilted like a counterpane, edged with a cambric frill, and tied under her chin with ribbons that were never fresh. She wore a short upper skirt of stout cloth over a quilted petticoat, a perfect mattress, within which lurked double louis d'or; and she had pockets sewn to a waistband, which she took off at night and put on in the morning as a garment. Her figure was wrapped in the usual jacket bodice of Breton women, made of cloth like the skirt, and finished with a close pleated frill, of which the washing formed the only subject of difference between her and the Baroness; she insisted on changing it but once a week. Out of the wadded sleeves of this jacket came a pair of withered but sinewy arms, and two ever-busy hands, somewhat red, which made her arms look as white as poplar wood. These fingers, claw-like from the contraction induced by the habit of knitting, were like a stocking-machine in constant motion; the wonder would have been to see them at rest. Now and then Mademoiselle du Guénic would take one of the long knitting-needles darned into the bosom of her dress, and push it in under her hood among her white hairs. A stranger would have laughed to see how calmly she stuck it in again, without any fear of pricking herself. She was as upright as a steeple; her columnar rigidity might be regarded as one of those old women's vanities which prove that pride is a passion indispensable to vitality. She had a bright smile; she, too, had done her duty.

As soon as Fanny saw that the Baron was asleep, she ceased reading. A sunbeam shot across from window to window, cutting the atmosphere of the old room in two by a band of gold, and casting a glory on the almost blackened furniture. The light caught the carvings of the cornice, fluttered over the cabinets, spread a shining face over the oak table, and gave cheerfulness to this softly sombre room, just as Fanny's voice brought to the old woman's spirit a harmony as luminous and gay as the sunbeam. Ere long the rays of the sun assumed a

reddish glow, which by insensible degrees sank to the melancholy hues of dusk. The Baroness fell into serious thought, one of those spells of perfect silence which her old sister-in-law had noticed during a fortnight past, trying to account for them without questioning the Baroness in any way; but she was studying the causes of this absence of mind as only blind people can, who read as it were a black book with white letters, while every sound rings through their soul as though it were an oracular echo. The old blind woman, to whom the falling darkness now meant nothing, went on knitting, and the silence was so complete that the tick of her steel knitting-needles could be heard.

"You have dropped the paper—but you are not asleep, sister," said the old woman sagaciously.

It was now dark; Mariotte came in to light the lamp and placed it on a square table in front of the fire; then she fetched her distaff, her hank of flax, and a little stool, and sat down to spin in the window recess on the side toward the courtyard, as she did every evening. Gasselin was still busy in the outbuildings, attending to the Baron's horse and that of Calyste, seeing that all was right in the stables, and giving the two fine hounds their evening meal. The glad barking of these two creatures was the last sound that roused the echoes lurking in the dark walls of the house.

These two horses and two dogs were the last remains of the splendor of chivalry. An imaginative man, sitting on the outer steps, and abandoning himself to the poetry of the images still living in this dwelling, might have been startled at hearing the dogs and the tramping hoofs of the neighing steeds.

Gasselin was one of the short, sturdy, square-built Breton race, with black hair and tanned faces, silent, slow, as stubborn as mules, but always going on the road marked out for them. He was now forty-two, and had lived in the house twenty-five years. Mademoiselle had engaged Gasselin as

servant when he was fifteen, on hearing of the Baron's marriage and probable return. This henchman considered himself a member of the family. He had played with Calyste, he loved the horses and dogs, and talked to them and petted them as though they were his own. He wore a short jacket of blue linen with little pockets that flapped over his hips, and a vest and trousers of the same material, in all seasons alike, blue stockings and hobnailed shoes. When the weather was very cold or wet he added the goatskin with the hair on worn in his province.

Mariotte, who was also past forty, was as a woman exactly what Gasselin was as a man. Never did a better pair run in harness; the same color, the same figure, the same small, sharp black eyes. It was hard to imagine why Mariotte and Gasselin had never married; but it might have been criminal; they almost seemed like brother and sister. Mariotte had thirty crowns a year in wages and Gasselin a hundred livres; but not for a thousand francs a year would they have quitted the house of the Guénics. They were both under the jurisdiction of old mademoiselle, who had been in the habit of managing the house from the time of the war in la Vendée till her brother's return. Hence she had been greatly upset on hearing that her brother was bringing home a mistress of the house, supposing that she would have to lay down the domestic sceptre in favor of the Baronne du Guénic, whose first subject she would then be.

Mademoiselle Zéphirine had been very agreeably surprised on finding that Miss Fanny O'Brien was born to a lofty position, a girl who detested the minute cares of housekeeping, and who, like all noble souls, would have preferred dry bread from the bakers to any food she had to prepare herself; capable of fulfilling all the duties of motherhood, strong to endure every necessary privation, but without energy for commonplace industry. When the Baron, in the name of his shrinking wife, begged his sister to rule the house, the old maid em-

braced the Baroness as her sister; she made a daughter of her, she adored her, happy in being allowed to continue her care of governing the house, and keeping it with incredible rigor and most economical habits, which she relaxed only on great occasions, such as her sister-in-law's confinement and feeding, and everything that could affect Calyste, the worshiped son of the house.

Though the two servants were accustomed to this strict rule, and needed no telling; though they took more care of their master's interests than of their own, still Mademoiselle Zéphirine had an eye on everything. Her attention having nothing to divert it, she was the woman to know without going to look how large the pile of walnuts should be in the loft, and how much corn was left in the stable-bin without plunging her sinewy arm into its depths. She wore a boatswain's whistle attached by a string to her waistband, and called Mariotte by whistling once and Gasselin by whistling twice. Gasselin's chief happiness consisted in cultivating the garden and raising fine fruit and good vegetables. He had so little to do that but for his gardening he would have been bored to death. When he had groomed the horses in the morning he polished the floors and cleaned the two first-floor rooms; he had little to do for his masters. So in the garden you could not have found a weed or a noxious insect. Sometimes Gasselin might be seen standing motionless and bareheaded in the sunshine, watching for a field-rat or the dreadful larvæ of the cockchafer; then he would rush in with a child's glee to show the master the creature he had spent a week in catching. On fast days it was his delight to go to le Croisic to buy fish, cheaper there than at Guérande.

Never was there a family more united, on better terms, or more inseparable, than this pious and noble household. Masters and servants seemed to have been made for each other. In five-and-twenty years there had never been a trouble or a discord. The only sorrows they had known were the

child's little ailments, and the only anxieties had come of the events of 1814, and again of 1830. If the same things were invariably done at the same hours, if the food varied only with the changes of the seasons, this monotony, like that of nature, with its alternation of cloud, rain, and sunshine, was made endurable by the affection that filled every heart, and was all the more helpful and beneficent because it was the outcome of natural laws.

When twilight was ended, Gasselin came into the room and respectfully inquired whether he were wanted.

"After prayers you can go out or go to bed," said the Baron, rousing himself, "unless madame or my sister——"

The two ladies nodded agreement. Gasselin, seeing them all rise to kneel on their chairs, fell on his knees. Mariotte knelt on her stool. Old Mademoiselle du Guénic said prayers aloud.

As she finished, a knock was heard at the outer gate. Gasselin went to open it.

"It is Monsieur le Curé, no doubt; he is almost always the first," remarked Mariotte.

And, in fact, they all recognized the footstep of the parish priest on the resonant steps to the balcony entrance. The curé bowed respectfully to the three, addressing the Baron and the two ladies with the unctuous civility that a priest has at his command. In reply to an absent-minded "Good-evening" from the mistress of the house, he gave her a look of priestly scrutiny.

"Are you uneasy, madame, or unwell?" he asked.

"Thank you, no!" said she.

Monsieur Grimont, a man of about fifty, of middle height, wrapped in his gown, beneath which a pair of thick shoes with silver buckles were visible, showed above his bands a fat face, on the whole fair, but sallow. His hands were plump. His abbot-like countenance had something of the Dutch burgomaster in its calm complexion and the tones of the flesh,

and something, too, of the Breton peasant in its straight black hair and sparkling black eyes, which nevertheless were under the control of priestly decorum. His cheerfulness, like that of all people whose conscience is calm and pure, consented to jest. There was nothing anxious or forbidding in his look, as in that of those unhappy priests whose maintenance or power is disputed by their parishioners, and who instead of being, as Napoleon so grandly said, the moral leaders of the people and natural justices of the peace, are regarded as enemies. The most unbelieving of strangers who should see Monsieur Grimont walking through Guérande would have recognized him as the sovereign of the Catholic town; but this sovereign abdicated his spiritual rule before the feudal supremacy of the du Guénic family. In this drawing-room he was as a chaplain in the hall of his liege. In church, as he gave the blessing, his hand always turned first toward the chapel of the house, where their hand and sword and their motto were carved on the keystone of the vaulting.

"I thought that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was here," said the curé, seating himself, as he kissed the Baroness' hand. "She is losing her good habits. Is the fashion for dissipation spreading? For I observe that Monsieur le Chevalier is at les Touches again this evening."

"Say nothing of his visits there before Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël," exclaimed the old lady in an undertone.

"Ah! mademoiselle," Mariotte put in, "how can you keep the whole town from talking?"

"And what do they say?" asked the Baroness.

"All the girls and the old gossips—everybody, in short—is saying that he is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches."

"A young fellow so handsome as Calyste is only following his calling by making himself loved," said the Baron.

"Here is Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël," said Mariotte.

The gravel in the courtyard was, in fact, heard to crunch under this lady's deliberate steps, heralded by a lad bearing a

lantern. On seeing this retainer, Mariotte transferred her stool and distaff to the large hall, where she could chat with him by the light of the rosin candle that burned at the cost of the rich and stingy old maid, thus saving her master's.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was a slight, thin woman, as yellow as the parchment of an archive, and wrinkled like a lake swept by the wind, with gray eyes, large prominent teeth, and hands like a man's; she was short, certainly crooked, and perhaps even hump-backed; but no one had ever been curious to study her perfections or imperfections. Dressed in the same style as Mademoiselle du Guénic, she made quite a commotion in a huge mass of petticoats and frills when she tried to find one of the two openings in her gown by which she got at her pockets; the strangest clinking of keys and money was then heard from beneath these skirts. All the iron paraphernalia of a good housewife was to be found on one side, and on the other her silver snuff-box, her thimble, her knitting, and other jangling objects.

Instead of the quilted hood worn by Mademoiselle du Guénic, she had a green bonnet, which she no doubt wore when she went to look at her melons; like them, it has faded from green to yellow, and as for its shape, fashion has lately revived it in Paris under the name of *Bibi*. This bonnet was made under her own eye by her nieces, of green sarsnet purchased at Guérande, on a shape she bought new every five years at Nantes—for she allowed it the life of an administration. Her nieces also made her gowns, cut by an immemorial pattern. The old maid still used the crutch-handled cane which ladies carried at the beginning of the reign of Marie-Antoinette. She was of the first nobility of Brittany. On her shield figured the ermines of the ancient duchy; the illustrious Breton house of Pen-Hoël ended in her and her sister.

This younger sister had married a Kergarouët, who, in spite of the disapprobation of the neighbors, had added the

name of Pen-Hoël to his own, and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël.

"Heaven has punished him," the old maid would say. "He has only daughters, and the name of Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël will become extinct."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël enjoyed an income of about seven thousand francs from land. For thirty-six years, since she had come of age, she herself had managed her estates; she rode out to inspect them, and on every point displayed the firmness of will characteristic of deformed persons. Her avarice was the amazement of all for ten leagues around, but viewed with no disapprobation. She kept one woman servant and this lad; all her expenditure, not inclusive of taxes, did not come to more than a thousand francs a year. Hence she was the object of the most flattering attentions from the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, who spent the winter at Nantes and the summer at their country-house on the banks of the Loire just below Indret. It was known that she intended to leave her fortune and her savings to that one of her nieces whom she might prefer. Every three months one of the four Demoiselles de Kergarouët came to spend a few days with her.

Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, a great friend of Zéphirine de Guénic's, and brought up in the faith and fear of the Breton dignity of the Guénics, had conceived a plan, since Calyste's birth, of securing her wealth to this youth by getting him to marry one of these nieces, to be bestowed on him by the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël. She proposed to repurchase some of the best land for the Guénics by paying off the farmers' loans. When avarice has an end in view it ceases to be a vice; it is the instrument of virtue; its stern privations become a constant sacrifice; in short, it has greatness of purpose concealed beneath its meanness. Zéphirine was perhaps in Jacqueline's secret. Perhaps, too, the Baroness, whose whole intelligence was absorbed in love for her

son and tender care for his father, may have guessed something when she saw with what pertinacious perseverance Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël would bring with her, day after day, Charlotte de Kergarouët, her favorite niece, now fifteen. The priest, Monsieur Grimont, was undoubtedly in her confidence; he helped the old lady to invest her money well. But if Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had had three hundred thousand francs in gold—the sum at which her savings were commonly estimated; if she had had ten times more land than she owned, the du Guénics would never have allowed themselves to pay her such attention as might lead the old maid to fancy that they were thinking of her fortune. With an admirable instinct of truly Breton pride, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, gladly accepting the supremacy assumed by her old friends Zéphirine and the du Guénics, always expressed herself honored by a visit when the descendant of Irish kings and Zéphirine condescended to call on her. She went so far as to conceal with care the little extravagance which she winked at every evening by permitting her boy to burn an *oribus* at the du Guénics'—the gingerbread-colored candle which is commonly used in various districts in the West. This rich old maid was indeed aristocracy, pride, and dignity personified.

At the moment when the reader is studying her portrait, an indiscretion on the part of the curé had betrayed the fact that, on the evening when the old Baron, the young chevalier, and Gasselin stole away armed with swords and fowling-pieces to join MADAME in la Vendée—to Fanny's extreme terror and to the great joy of the Bretons—Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had placed in the Baron's hands a sum of ten thousand francs in gold, an immense sacrifice, supplemented by ten thousand francs more, the fruits of a tithe collected by the curé, which the old partisan was requested to lay at the feet of Henri V.'s mother, in the name of the Pen-Hoëls and of the parish of Guérande.

Meanwhile she treated Calyste with the airs of a woman who believes she is in her rights; her schemes justified her in keeping an eye on him; not that she was strait-laced in her ideas as to questions of gallantry—she had all the indulgence of a woman of the old régime; but she had a horror of Revolutionary manners. Calyste, who might have risen in her esteem by intrigues with Breton women, would have fallen immensely if he had taken up what she called the new-fangled ways. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who would have unearthed a sum of money to pay off a girl he had seduced, would have regarded Calyste as a reckless spendthrift if she had seen him driving a tilbury, or heard him talk of setting out for Paris. And if she had found him reading some impious review or newspaper, it is impossible to imagine what she might have done. To her, new notions meant the rotation of crops, sheer ruin under the guise of improvements and methods, lands ultimately mortgaged as a result of experiments. To her, thrift was the real way to make a fortune; good management consisted in filling her outhouses with buckwheat, rye, and hemp; at waiting for prices to rise at the risk of being known to force the market, and in resolutely hoarding her corn-sacks. As it happened, strangely enough, she had often met with good bargains that confirmed her in her principles. She was thought cunning, but she was not really clever; she had only the methodical habits of a Dutchwoman, the caution of a cat, the pertinacity of a priest; and this, in a land of routine, was as good as the deepest perspicacity.

"Shall we see Monsieur du Halga this evening?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, taking off her knitted worsted mittens after exchanging the usual civilities.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I saw him airing his dog in the mall," replied the curé.

"Then our *mouche* will be lively this evening," said she. "We were but four last night."

On hearing the word *mouche*, the priest rose and brought

out of a drawer of one of the cabinets a small round basket of fine willow, some ivory counters as yellow as Turkish tobacco, from twenty years' service, and a pack of cards as greasy as those of the custom-house officers of Saint-Nazaire, who only have a new pack once a fortnight. The abbé himself sorted out the proper number of counters for each player, and put the basket by the lamp in the middle of the table, with childish eagerness and the manner of a man accustomed to fulfill this little task. A loud rap in military style presently echoed through the silent depths of the old house. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's little servant went solemnly to open the gate. Before long the tall, lean figure of the Chevalier du Halga, formerly flag-captain under Admiral de Kergarouët, was seen, carefully dressed to suit the season, a black object in the dusk that still prevailed outside.

"Come in, chevalier," cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"The altar is prepared!" said the priest.

Du Halga, whose health was poor, wore flannel for the rheumatism, a black silk cap to protect his head against the fog, and a spencer to guard his precious chest from the sudden blasts of wind that refresh the atmosphere of Guérande. He always went about armed with a rattan to drive off dogs when they tried to make inopportune love to his own, which was a lady. This man, as minutely particular as any fine lady, put out by the smallest obstacles, speaking low to spare the voice remaining to him, had been in his day one of the bravest and most capable officers of the King's navy. He had been honored with the confidence of the Bailli de Suffren and the Comte de Portenduère's friendship. His valor, as captain of Admiral de Kergarouët's flag-ship, was scored in legible characters on his face, seamed with scars. No one, on looking at him, could have recognized the voice that had roared down the storm, the eye that had swept the horizon, the indomitable courage of a Breton seaman. He did not smoke, he never swore; he was as gentle and quiet as a girl, and devoted him-

self to his dog Thisbe and her various little whims with the absorption of an old woman. He gave every one a high idea of his departed gallantry. He never spoke of the startling acts which had amazed the Comte d'Estaing.

Though he stooped like a pensioner and walked as though he feared to tread on eggs at every step, though he complained of a cool breeze, of a scorching sun, of a damp fog, he displayed fine white teeth set in red gums, which were reassuring as to his health; and, indeed, his complaint must have been an expensive one, for it consisted in eating four meals a day of monastic abundance. His frame, like the Baron's, was large-boned and indestructibly strong, covered with parchment stretched tightly over the bones, like the coat of an Arab horse that shines in the sun over its sinews. His complexion had preserved the tanned hue it had acquired in his voyages to India, but he had brought back no ideas and no reminiscences. He had emigrated; he had lost all his fortune; then he had recovered the cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs, legitimately earned by his services, and paid out of the fund for naval pensions. The harmless hypochondria that led him to invent a thousand imaginary ailments was easily accounted for by his sufferings during the emigration. He had served in the Russian navy till the day when the Emperor Alexander wanted him to serve against France; he then retired and went to live at Odessa, near the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he came home, and who procured the payment of the pension due to this noble wreck of the old Breton navy.

At the death of Louis XVIII. he came home to Guérande and was chosen mayor of the town. The curé, the chevalier, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had been for fifteen years in the habit of spending their evenings at the Hôtel du Guénic, whither also came a few persons of good family from the town and immediate neighborhood. It is easy to see that the Guénic family were the leaders of this little Faubourg Saint-

Germain of the district, into which no official was admitted who had been appointed to his post by the new Government. For six years past the curé invariably coughed at the critical words of *Domine, salvum fac regem.* Politics always stuck at that point in Guérande.

Mouche (a sort of loo) is a game played with five cards in each hand and a turn-up. The turned-up card decides the trumps. At every fresh deal each player is at liberty to play or to retire. If he throws away his hand, he loses only his deposit; for as long as no fines have been paid into the pool, each player must contribute to it. Those who play must make a trick, paid for in proportion to the contents of the pool; if there are five sous in the trick, he pays one sou. The player who fails to pay is *looed;* he then owes as much as the pool contains, which increases it for the following deal. The fines due are written down; they are added to the pools one after another in diminishing order, the heaviest before the lesser sums. Those who decline to play show their cards during the play, but they count for nothing. The players may discard and draw from the pack, as at *écarté*, in order of seniority. Each player may change as many cards as he likes, so the eldest and the second hands may use up the pack between them. The turned-up card belongs to the dealer, who is the youngest hand; he has a right to exchange it for any card in his own hand. One terrible card takes all others, and is known as *mistigris;* mistigris is the knave of clubs. This game, though so excessively simple, is not devoid of interest. The covetousness natural to man finds scope in it, as well as some diplomatic finessing and play of expression.

At the Hôtel du Guénic each player purchased twenty counters for five sous, by which the stake amounted to five liards each deal, an important sum in the eyes of these gamblers. With very great luck a player might win fifty sous, more than any one in Guérande spent in a day. And Made-

moiselle de Pen-Hoël came to this game—of which the simplicity is unsurpassed in the nomenclature of the Academy, unless by that of Beggar my Neighbor—with an eagerness as great as that of a sportsman at a great hunting party. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who was the Baroness' partner, attached no less importance to the game of *mouche*. To risk a liard* for the chance of winning five, deal after deal, constituted a serious financial speculation to the thrifty old woman, and she threw herself into it with as much moral energy as the greediest speculator puts into gambling on the Bourse for the rise and fall of shares.

By a diplomatic convention, dating from September, 1825, after a certain evening when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had lost thirty-seven sous, the game was ended as soon as any one expressed a wish to that effect after losing ten sous. Politeness would not allow of a player being put to the little discomfort of looking on at the game without taking part in it. But every passion has its jesuitical side. The Chevalier du Halga and the Baron, two old politicians, had found a way of evading the act. When all the players were equally eager to prolong an exciting game, the brave chevalier, one of those bachelors who are prodigal and rich by the expenses they save, always offered to lend Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël or Mademoiselle Zéphirine ten counters when either of them had lost her five sous, on the understanding that she should repay them if she should win. An old bachelor might allow himself such an act of gallantry to the unmarried ladies. The Baron also would offer the old maids ten counters, under pretense of not stopping the game. The avaricious old women always accepted, not without some pressing, after the usage and custom of old maids. But to allow themselves such a piece of extravagance the Baron and the chevalier must first have won, otherwise the offer bore the character of an affront.

This game was in its glory when a young Mademoiselle de

* A liard was the fourth of a sou.

Kergarouët was on a visit to her aunt—Kergarouët only, for the family had never succeeded in getting itself called Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël by anybody here, not even by the servants, who had indeed peremptory orders on this point. The aunt spoke of the *mouche* parties at the Guénics' as a great treat. The girl was enjoined to make herself agreeable—an easy matter enough when she saw the handsome Calyste, on whom the four young ladies all doted. These damsels, brought up in the midst of modern civilization, thought little of five sous, and paid fine after fine. Then fines would be scored up to a total sometimes of five francs, on a scale ranging from two sous and a half up to ten sous. These were evenings of intense excitement to the old blind woman. The tricks were called *mains* (or hands) at Guérande. The Baroness would press her foot on her sister-in-law's as many times as she had, as she believed, tricks in her hand. The question of play or no play on occasions when the pool was full led to secret struggles in which covetousness contended with alarms. The players would ask each other, "Are you coming in?" with feelings of envy of those who had good enough cards to tempt fate and spasms of despair when they were forced to retire.

If Charlotte de Kergarouët, who was commonly thought foolhardy, was lucky in her daring when her aunt had won nothing, she was treated with coldness when they got home, and had a little lecture: "She was too decided and forward; a young girl ought not to challenge persons older than herself; she had an overbold manner of seizing the pool or declaring to play; a young person should show more reserve and modesty in her manners; it was not seemly to laugh at the misfortunes of others," and so forth.

Then perennial jests, repeated a thousand times a year, but always fresh, turned on the carriage of the basket when the pool overfilled it. They must get oxen to draw it, elephants, horses, asses, dogs. And at the end of twenty years no one noticed the staleness of the joke; it always provoked the same

smile. It was the same thing with the remarks caûsed by the annoyance of seeing a pool taken from those who had helped to fill it and got nothing out. The cards were dealt with automatic slowness. They talked in chest tones. And these respectable and high-born personages were so delightfully mean as to suspect each other's play. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël almost always accused the curé of cheating when he won a pool.

"But what is so odd," the curé would say, "is that I never cheat when I am fined."

No one laid down a card without profound meditation, without keen scrutiny, and more or less astute hints, ingenious and searching remarks. The deals were interrupted, you may be sure, by gossip as to what was going on in the town, or discussions on politics. Frequently the players would pause for a quarter of an hour, their cards held in a fan against their chest, absorbed in talk. Then, if after such an interruption a counter was short in the pool, everybody was certain that his or her counter was not missing; and generally it was the chevalier who made up the loss, under general accusations of thinking of nothing but the singing in his ears, his headache, or his fads, and of forgetting to put in. As soon as he had paid up a counter, old Zéphirine or the cunning hunchback was seized with remorse; they then fancied that perhaps the fault was theirs; they thought, they doubted; but, after all, the chevalier could afford the little loss! The Baron often quite forgot what he was about when the misfortunes of the royal family came under discussion.

Sometimes the game resulted in a way that was invariably a surprise to the players, who each counted on being the winner. After a certain number of rounds each had won back his counters and went away, the hour being late, without loss or profit, but not without excitement. On these depressing evenings the *mouche* was abused; it had not been interesting; the players accused the game, as negroes beat the reflection of

the moon in water when the weather is bad. The evening had been dull; they had toiled so hard for so little.

When, on their first visit, the Vicomte de Kergarouët and his wife spoke of whist and boston as games more interesting than *mouche*, and were encouraged to teach them by the Baroness, who was bored to death by *mouche*, the company lent themselves to the innovation, not without strong protest; but it was impossible to make these games understood; and as soon as the Kergarouëts had left, they were spoken of as overwhelmingly abstruse, as algebraical puzzles, and incredibly difficult. They all preferred their beloved *mouche*, their unpretentious little *mouche*. And *mouche* triumphed over the modern games, as old things constantly triumph over new in Brittany.

While the curé dealt the cards, the Baroness was asking the Chevalier du Halga the same questions as she had asked the day before as to his health. The chevalier made it a point of honor to have some new complaint. Though the questions were always the same, the captain had a great advantage in his replies. To-day his false ribs had been troubling him. The remarkable thing was that the worthy man never complained of his wounds. Everything serious he was prepared for, he understood it; but fantastic ailments—pains in his head, dogs devouring his inside, bells ringing in his ears—and a thousand other crotchets worried him greatly; he set up as an incurable, with all the more reason that physicians know no remedy for maladies that are non-existent.

"Yesterday, I fancy you had pains in your legs," said the curé very seriously.

"They move about," replied du Halga.

"Legs in your false ribs?" asked Mademoiselle Zéphirine.

"And made no halt on the way?" said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël with a smile.

The chevalier bowed gravely, with a negative shake of the head, not without fun in it, which would have proved to an

observer that in his youth the seaman must have been witty, loved and loving. His fossilized life at Guérande covered perhaps many memories. As he stood planted on his heron's legs in the sun, stupidly watching the sea or his dog sporting on the mall, perhaps he was alive again in the earthly paradise of a past rich in remembrance.

"So the old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead?" said the Baron, recalling the passage in the "Quotidienne" at which his wife had stopped. "Well, well, the first gentleman-in-waiting had not long to wait before following his master. I shall soon go too."

"My dear! my dear!" said his wife, gently patting his lean and bony hand.

"Let him talk, sister," said Zéphirine. "So long as I am above ground, he will not go under ground. He is younger than I am."

A cheerful smile brightened the old woman's face when the Baron dropped a reflection of this kind, the players and callers would look at each other anxiously, grieved to find the King of Guérande out of spirits. Those who had come to see him would say as they went away, "Monsieur de Guénic is much depressed; have you noticed how much he sleeps?" And next day all Guérande would be talking of it: "The Baron du Guénic is failing." The words began the conversation in every house in the place.

"And is Thisbe well?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël as soon as the deal was over.

"The poor little beast is like me," said the chevalier. "Her nerves are out of order; she is always holding up one of her legs as she runs. Like this."

And in showing how Thisbe ran, by bending his arm as he raised it, the chevalier allowed his neighbor, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, to see his cards; she wanted to know whether he had trumps or *mistigris*. This was the first finesse to which he fell a prey.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Baroness, "the tip of Monsieur le Curé's nose has turned pale, he must have mistigris!"

The joy of having mistigris was so great to the curé, as to all the players, that the poor priest could not disguise it. There is in each human face some spot where every secret emotion of the heart betrays itself; and these good people, accustomed to watch each other, had, after the lapse of years, discovered the weak place in the curé—when he had mistigris the tip of his nose turned white. Then they all took care not to play.

"You have had visitors to-day?" said the chevalier to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Yes; one of my brother-in-law's cousins. He surprised me by telling me of the intended marriage of Madame la Comtesse de Kergarouët, a Demoiselle de Fontaine——"

"A daughter of Grand-Jacques!" exclaimed du Halga, who during his stay in Paris had never left his admiral's side.

"The Countess inherits everything; she has married a man who was ambassador. He told me the most extraordinary things about our neighbor, Mademoiselle des Touches; so extraordinary, that I will not believe them. Calyste could never be so attentive to her; he has surely enough good sense to perceive such monstrosities."

"Monstrosities!" said the Baron, roused by the word.

The Baroness and the priest looked meaningly at each other. The cards were dealt. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had mistigris; she did not want to continue the conversation, but was glad to cover her delight under the general amazement caused by this word.

"It is your turn to lead, Monsieur le Baron," said she, bridling.

"My dear nephew is not one of those young men who like monstrosities," said Zéphirine, poking her knitting-pin through her hair.

"Mistigris!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, without answering her friend.

The curé, who appeared fully informed as to all that concerned Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches, did not enter the lists.

"What does she do that is so extraordinary, this Mademoiselle des Touches?" asked the Baron.

"She smokes," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"It is very wholesome," said the chevalier.

"Her bacon?" asked the Baron.

"Her bacon! She does not save it," retorted the old maid.

"Every one played, and every one is looed; I have the king, queen, and knave of trumps, mistigris, and a king," said the Baroness. "The pool is ours, sister."

This stroke, won without play, overwhelmed Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who thought no more of Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches. At nine o'clock no one remained in the room but the Baroness and the curé. The four old people had gone away and to bed.

The chevalier, as usual, escorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to her own house in the market-place, making remarks on the skill of the last player, on their good or ill luck, or on the ever-new glee with which Mademoiselle Zéphirine's pocket engulfed her winnings, for the old blind woman made no attempt now to disguise the expression of her sentiments in her face. Madame du Guénic's absence of mind was their subject to-night. The chevalier had observed the charming Irishwoman's inattention to the game. On the doorstep, when her boy had gone upstairs, the old lady replied in confidence to the chevalier's guesses as to the Baroness' strange manner by these words, big with importance—

"I know the reason; Calyste is done for if he is not soon married. He is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches—an actress!"

"In that case, send for Charlotte."

"My sister shall hear from me to-morrow," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, bidding him good-night.

From this study of a normal evening, the commotion may be imagined that was produced in the home circles of Guérande by the arrival, the stay, the departure, or even the passing through of a stranger.

When not a sound was audible in the Baron's room or in his sister's, Madame du Guénic turned to the priest, who was pensively playing with the counters.

"I see that you at last share my uneasiness about Calyste," she said.

"Did you notice Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's prim air this evening?" asked he.

"Yes," replied the Baroness.

"She has, I know, the very best intentions toward our dear Calyste; she loves him as if he were her son; and his conduct in la Vandée at his father's side, with MADAME'S praise of his devoted behavior, has added to the affection Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël feels for him. She will endow either of her nieces whom Calyste may marry with all her fortune by deed of gift.

"You have, I know, in Ireland, a far richer match for your beloved boy; but it is well to have two strings to one's bow. In the event of your family not choosing to undertake to settle anything on Calyste, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's fortune is not to be despised. You could, no doubt, find your son a wife with seven thousand francs a year, but not the savings of forty years, nor lands managed, tilled, and kept up as Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's are. That wicked woman, Mademoiselle des Touches, has come to spoil everything. We have at last found out something about her."

"Well?" asked the mother.

"Oh, she is a slut, a baggage," exclaimed the curé. "A woman of doubtful habits, always hanging about the theatres in the company of actors and actresses, squandering her for-

tune with journalists, painters, musicians—the devil's own, in short! When she writes, she uses a different name in her books, and is better known by that, it is said, than by that of des Touches. A perfect imp, who has never been inside a church since her first communion, excepting to stare at statues or pictures. She has spent her fortune in decorating les Touches in the most improper manner to make it a sort of Mahomet's paradise, where the houris are not women. There is more good wine drunk there while she is in the place than in all Guérande beside in a year. Last year the Demoiselles Bougniol had for lodgers some men with goats' beards, suspected of being 'blues,' who used to go to her house, and who sang songs that made those virtuous girls blush and weep. That is the woman your son at present adores.

"If that creature were to ask this evening for one of the atrocious books in which atheists nowadays laugh everything to scorn, the young chevalier would come and saddle his horse with his own hands, to ride off at a gallop to fetch it for her from Nantes. I do not know that Calyste would do so much for the church. And then, Bretonne as she is, she is not a Royalist. If it were necessary to march out, gun in hand, for the good cause, should Mademoiselle des Touches—or Camille Maupin, for that, I remember, is her name—want to keep Calyste with her, your son would let his old father set out alone."

"No," said the Baroness.

"I should not like to put him to the test, you might feel it too painfully," replied the curé. "All Guérande is in a commotion over the chevalier's passion for this amphibious creature that is neither man nor woman, who smokes like a trooper, writes like a journalist, and, at this moment, has under her roof the most malignant writer of them all, according to the postmaster—a trimmer who reads all the papers. It is talked of at Nantes. This morning the Kergarouët cousin, who wants to see Charlotte married to a man who has

sixty thousand francs a year, came to call on Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, and turned her head with roundabout tales about Mademoiselle des Touches which lasted seven hours. There is a quarter to ten striking by the church clock, and Calyste is not come in; he is at les Touches—perhaps he will not come back until morning."

The Baroness listened to the curé, who had unconsciously substituted monologue for dialogue; he was looking at this lamb of his flock, reading her uneasy thoughts in her face. The Baroness was blushing and trembling. When the Abbé Grimont saw tears in the distressed mother's beautiful eyes, he was deeply touched.

"I will see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to-morrow, be comforted," said he, in an encouraging tone. "The mischief is, perhaps, not so great as rumor says; I will find out the truth. Beside, Mademoiselle Jacqueline has confidence in me. Again, we have brought up Calyste, and he will not allow himself to be bewitched by the demon; he will do nothing to disturb the peace of his family, or the plans we are making for his future life. Do not weep; all is not lost, madame; one fault is not vice."

"You only tell me the details," said the Baroness. "Was not I the first to perceive the change in Calyste? A mother feels keenly the pain of being second in her son's affections, the grief of not being alone in his heart. That phase of a man's life is one of the woes of motherhood; but though I knew it must come, I did not expect it so soon. And, then, I could have wished that he should have taken into his heart some beautiful and noble creature, not a mere actress, a posture-maker, a woman who frequents theatres, an authoress accustomed to feign feeling, a bad woman who will deceive him and make him wretched. She has had 'affairs?'"

"With many men," said the Abbé Grimont. "And yet this miscreant was born in Brittany. She is a disgrace to her native soil. On Sunday I will preach a sermon about her."

"By no means!" exclaimed the Baroness. "The marshmen and peasants are capable of attacking les Touches. Calyste is worthy of his name: he is a true Breton; and some evil might come of it if he were there, for he would fight for her as if she were the blessed Virgin."

"It is striking ten; I will bid you good-night," said the abbé, lighting the *oribus* of his lantern, of which the clear glass-panes and glittering metal-work showed his housekeeper's minute care for all the concerns of the house. "Who could have told me, madame," he went on, "that a young man nursed at your breast, brought up by me in Christian ideas, a fervent Catholic, a boy who lived like a lamb without spot, would plunge into such a foul bog?"

"But is that quite certain?" said the mother. "And, after all, how could any woman help loving Calyste?"

"No proof is needed beyond that witch's prolonged stay at les Touches. During twenty-four years, since she came of age, this is the longest visit she has paid here. Happily for us, her apparitions have hitherto been brief."

"A woman past forty!" said the Baroness. "I have heard it said in Ireland that such a woman is the most dangerous mistress a young man can have."

"On that point I am ignorant," replied the curé. "Nay, and I shall die in my ignorance."

"Alas! and so shall I," said the Baroness. "I wish now that I had ever been in love, to be able to study, advise, and comfort Calyste."

The priest did not cross the clean little courtyard alone; Madame du Guénic went with him as far as the gate, in the hope of hearing Calyste's step in Guérande; but she heard only the heavy sound of the abbé's deliberate tread, which grew fainter in the distance, and ceased when the shutting of the priest's door echoed through the silent town.

The poor mother went indoors in despair at learning

that the whole town was informed of what she had believed herself alone in knowing. She sat down, revived the lamp by cutting the wick with a pair of old scissors, and took up the worsted work she was accustomed to do while waiting for Calyste. She flattered herself that she thus induced her son to come home earlier, to spend less time with Mademoiselle des Touches. But this stratagem of maternal jealousy was in vain. Calyste's visits to les Touches became more and more frequent, and every evening he came in a little later; at last, the previous night, he had not returned until midnight.

The Baroness, sunk in meditation, set her stitches with the energy of women who can think while following some manual occupation. Any one who should have seen her bent to catch the light of the lamp, in the midst of the paneling of this room, four centuries old, must have admired the noble picture. Fanny's flesh had a transparency that seemed to show her thoughts legible on her brow. Stung, now, by the curiosity that comes to pure-minded women, she wondered by what diabolical secrets these daughters of Baal so bewitched a man as to make him forget his mother and family, his country, his self-interest. Then she went so far as to wish she could see the woman, so as to judge her sanely. She calculated the extent of the mischief that the innovating spirit of the age—which the curé described as so dangerous to youthful souls—might do to her only child, till now as guileless and pure as an innocent girl, whose beauty could not be fresher than his.

Calyste, a noble offshoot of the oldest Breton and the noblest Irish blood, had been carefully brought up by his mother. Till the moment when the Baroness handed him over to the curé of Guérande, she was sure that not an indecent word, nor an evil idea, had ever soiled her son's ear or his understanding. The mother, after rearing him on her own milk, and thus giving him a double infusion of her blood, could present him in virginal innocence to the priest who,

out of reverence for the family, undertook to give him a complete and Christian education. Calyste was educated on the plan of the seminary where the Abbé Grimont had been brought up. His mother taught him English. A mathematical master was discovered, not without difficulty, among the clerks at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste, of course, knew nothing of modern literature, or of the latest advance and progress of science. His education was limited to the geography and emasculated history taught in girls' schools, to the Latin and Greek of the seminary, to the literature of dead languages, and a limited selection of French writers. When, at sixteen, he began what the abbé called his course of philosophy, he was still as innocent as at the moment when Fanny had handed him over to the curé. The church was no less maternal than the mother; without being bigoted or ridiculous, this well-beloved youth was a fervent Catholic.

The Baroness longed to plan a happy and obscure life for her handsome and immaculate son. She expected some little fortune from an old aunt, about two or three thousand pounds sterling; this sum, added to the present fortune of the Guénics, might enable her to find a wife for Calyste who would bring him twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouët, with her aunt's money, some rich Irish girl, or any other heiress—it was a matter of indifference to the Baroness. She knew nothing of love; like all the people among whom she lived, she regarded marriage as a stepping-stone to fortune. Passion was a thing unknown to these Catholics, old people wholly occupied in saving their souls, in thinking of God, the King, and their own wealth.

No one, therefore, can be surprised at the gravity of the reflections that mingled with the wounded feelings in this mother's heart, living, as she did, as much for her boy's interests as by his affection. If the young couple would but listen to reason, by living parsimoniously and economizing, as country folk know how, by the second generation the du

Guénics might repurchase their old estates and reconquer the splendor of wealth. The Baroness hoped to live to be old that she might see the dawn of that life of ease. Mademoiselle du Guénic had understood and adopted this scheme, and now it was threatened by Mademoiselle des Touches.

Madame du Guénic heard midnight strike with horror, and she endured an hour more of fearful alarms, for the stroke of one rang out, and still Calyste had not come home.

"Will he stay there?" she wondered. "It would be the first time—poor child."

At this moment Calyste's step was heard in the street. The poor mother, in whose heart joy took the place of anxiety, flew from the room to the gate and opened it for her son.

"My dearest mother," cried Calyste, with a look of vexation, "why sit up for me? I have the latch-key and a tinder-box."

"You know, my child, that I can never sleep while you are out," said she, kissing him.

When the Baroness had returned to the room, she looked into her son's face to read in its expression what had happened during the evening; but this look produced in her, as it always did, a certain emotion which custom does not weaken —which all loving mothers feel as they gaze at their human masterpiece, and which for a moment dims their sight.

Calyste had black eyes, full of vigor and sunshine, inherited from his father, with the fine fair hair, the aquiline nose and lovely mouth, the turned-up finger-tips, the soft complexion, finish, and fairness of his mother. Though he looked not unlike a girl dressed as a man, he was wonderfully strong. His sinews had the elasticity and tension of steel springs, and the singular effect of his black eyes had a charm of its own. As yet he had no hair on his face; this late development, it is said, is a promise of long life. The young chevalier, who wore a short jacket of black velvet, like his mother's gown, with silver buttons, had a blue neckerchief, neat gaiters, and trousers of gray

drill. His snow-white forehead bore the traces, as it seemed, of great fatigue, but, in fact, they were those of a burden of sad thoughts. His mother, having no suspicion of the sorrows that were eating the lad's heart out, ascribed this transient change to happiness. Calyste was, nevertheless, as beautiful as a Greek god, handsome without conceit; for, in the first place, he was accustomed to see his mother, and he also cared but little for beauty, which he knew to be useless.

"And those lovely smooth cheeks," thought she, "where the rich young blood flows in a thousand tiny veins, belong to another woman, who is mistress, too, of that girl-like brow? Passion will stamp them with its agitations, and dim those fine eyes, as liquid now as a child's!"

The bitter thought fell heavy on Madame du Guénic's heart and spoilt her pleasure.

It must seem strange that, in a family where six persons were obliged to live on three thousand francs a year, the son should have a velvet coat and the mother a velvet dress; but Fanny O'Brien had rich relations and aunts in London who reminded the Breton Baroness of their existence by sending her presents. Some of her sisters, having married well, took an interest in Calyste so far as to think of finding him a rich wife, knowing that he was as handsome and as well born as their exiled favorite Fanny.

"You stayed later at les Touches than you did yesterday, my darling?" she said at last, in a broken voice.

"Yes, mother dear," replied he, without adding any explanation.

The brevity of the answer brought a cloud to his mother's brow; she postponed any explanation till the morrow. When mothers are disturbed by such alarms as the Baroness felt at this moment, they almost tremble before their sons; they instinctively feel the effects of the great emancipation of love; they understand all that this new feeling will rob them of; but, at the same time, they are, in a sense, glad of their son's

happiness; there is a fierce struggle in their hearts. Though the result is that the son is grown up, and on a higher level, true mothers do not like their tacit abdication; they would rather keep their child little and wanting care. That, perhaps, is the secret of mothers' favoritism for weakly, deformed, and helpless children.

"You are very tired, dear child," said she, swallowing down her tears. "Go to bed."

A mother who does not know everything her son is doing thinks of him as lost when she loves and is as well loved as Fanny. And perhaps any other mother would have quaked in her place as much as Madame du Guénic. The patience of twenty years might be made useless. Calyste—a human masterpiece of noble, prudent, and religious training—might be ruined; the happiness so carefully prepared for him might be destroyed for ever by a woman.

Next day Calyste slept till noon, for his mother would not allow him to be roused; Mariotte gave the spoilt boy his breakfast in bed. The immutable and almost conventual rule that governed the hours of meals yielded to the young gentleman's caprices. Indeed, when at any time it was necessary to obtain Mademoiselle du Guénic's bunch of keys to get out something between meals which would necessitate interminable explanations, the only way of doing it was to plead some whim of Calyste's.

At about one o'clock the Baron, his wife, and mademoiselle were sitting in the dining-room; they dined at three. The Baroness had taken up the "Quotidienne" and was finishing it to her husband, who was always rather more wakeful before his meals. Just as she had done, Madame du Guénic heard her son's step on the floor above, and laid down the paper, saying—

"Calyste, I suppose, is dining at les Touches again to-day; he has just finished dressing."

"He takes his pleasure—that boy!" said the old lady, pulling a silver whistle out of her pocket, and whistling once.

Mariotte came through the turret, making her appearance at the door, which was hidden by a silk damask curtain, like those at the windows.

"Yes," said she, "did you please to want anything?"

"The chevalier is dining at les Touches; we shall not want the fish."

"Well, we do not know yet," said the Baroness.

"You seem vexed about it, sister; I know by the tone of your voice," said the blind woman.

"Monsieur Grimont has learned some serious facts about Mademoiselle des Touches, who, during the last year, has done so much to change our dear Calyste."

"In what way?" asked the Baron.

"Well, he reads all sorts of books."

"Ah, ha!" said the Baron; "then that is why he neglects hunting and riding."

"She leads a very reprehensible life and calls herself by a man's name," Madame du Guénic went on.

"A nickname among comrades," said the old man. "I used to be called *l'Intimé*, the Comte de Fontaine was *Grand-Jacques*, the Marquis de Montauran was *le Gars*. I was a great friend of *Ferdinand's;* he did not submit, any more than I did. Those were good times! There was plenty of fighting, and we had some fun here and there, all the same."

These reminiscences of the war, thus taking the place of paternal anxiety, distressed Fanny for a moment. The curé's revelations and her son's want of confidence had hindered her sleeping.

"And if Monsieur le Chevalier should be in love with Mademoiselle des Touches, where is the harm?" exclaimed Mariotte. "She is a fine woman and has thirty thousand crowns a year."

"What are you talking about, Mariotte," cried the old man.

"A du Guénic to marry a des Touches! The des Touches were not even our squires at a time when the du Guesclins regarded an alliance with us as a distinguished honor."

"A woman who calls herself by a man's name—Camille Maupin!" added the Baroness.

"The Maupins are an old family," said the old man. "They are Norman, and bear *gules, three*——" he stopped short. "But she cannot be a man and a woman at the same time."

"She calls herself Maupin at the theatre."

"A des Touches cannot be an actress," said the old man. "If I did not know you, Fanny, I should think you were mad."

"She writes pieces and books," the Baroness went on.

"Writes books!" said the Baron, looking at his wife with as much astonishment as if he had heard of a miracle. "I have heard that Mademoiselle de Scudéri and Madame de Sévigné wrote books, and that was not the best of what they did. But only Louis XIV. and his court could produce such prodigies."

"You will be dining at les Touches, won't you, monsieur?" said Mariotte to Calyste, who came in.

"Probably," said the young man.

Mariotte was not inquisitive, and she was one of the family; she left the room without waiting to hear the question Madame du Guénic was about to put to Calyste.

"You are going to les Touches again, my Calyste?" said she, with an emphasis on *my* Calyste. "And les Touches is not a decent and reputable house. The mistress of it leads a wild life; she will corrupt our boy. Camille Maupin makes him read a great many books—she has had a great many adventures! And you knew it, bad child, and never said anything about it to your old folk."

"The chevalier is discreet," said his father, "an old-world virtue!"

"Too discreet!" said the jealous mother, as she saw the color mount to her son's brow.

"My dear mother," said Calyste, kneeling down before her; "I did not think it necessary to proclaim my defeat. Mademoiselle des Touches, or, if you prefer it, Camille Maupin, rejected my love eighteen months since, when she was here last. She gently made fun of me; she might be my mother, she said; a woman of forty who loved a minor committed a sort of incest, and she was incapable of such depravity. In short, she laughed at me in a hundred ways, and quite overpowered me, for she has the wit of an angel. Then, when she saw me crying bitter tears, she comforted me by offering me her friendship in the noblest way. She has even more heart than brains; she is as generous as you are. I am like a child to her now. Then, when she came here again, I heard that she loved another man and I resigned myself. Do not repeat all the calumnies you hear about her; Camille is an artist; she has genius, and leads one of those exceptional lives which cannot be judged by provincial or ordinary standards."

"My child!" said the pious Fanny, "nothing can excuse a woman for not living according to the ordinances of the church. She fails in her duties toward God and toward society by failing in the gentle religion of her sex. A woman commits a sin even by going to a theatre; but when she writes impieties to be repeated by actors, and flies about the world, sometimes with an enemy of the Pope's, sometimes with a musician—— Oh, Calyste! you will find it hard to convince me that such things are acts of faith, hope, or charity. Her fortune was given her by God to do good. What use does she make of it?"

Calyste suddenly stood up; he looked at his mother and said—

"Mother, Camille is my friend. I cannot hear her spoken of in this way, for I would give my life for her."

"Your life?" said the Baroness, gazing at her son in terror. "Your life is our life—the life of us all!"

"My handsome nephew has made use of many words that I do not understand," said the old blind woman, turning to Calyste.

"Where has he learned them?" added his mother. "At les Touches."

"Why, my dear mother, she found me as ignorant as a carp."

"You knew all that was essential in knowing the duties enjoined on us by religion," replied the Baroness. "Ah! that woman will undermine your noble and holy beliefs."

The old aunt rose and solemnly extended her hand toward her brother, who was sleeping.

"Calyste," said she, in a voice that came from her heart, "your father never opened a book, he speaks Breton, he fought in the midst of perils for the King and for God. Educated men had done the mischief, and gentlemen of learning had deserted their country. Learn if you will."

She sat down again and began knitting with the vehemence that came of her mental agitation. Calyste was struck by this Phocion-like utterance.

"In short, my dearest, I have a presentiment of some evil hanging over you in that house," said his mother, in a broken voice, as her tears fell.

"Who is making Fanny cry?" exclaimed the old man, suddenly wakened by the sound of his wife's voice. He looked round at her, his son, and his sister.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear," replied the Baroness.

"Mamma," said Calyste, in his mother's ear, "it is impossible that I should explain matters now; but we will talk it over this evening. When you know all, you will bless Mademoiselle des Touches."

"Mothers have no love of cursing," replied the Baroness,

"and I should never curse any woman who truly loved my Calyste."

The young man said good-by to his father, and left the house. The Baron and his wife rose to watch him as he crossed the courtyard, opened the gate, and disappeared. The Baroness did not take up the paper again; she was agitated. In a life so peaceful, so monotonous, this little discussion was as serious as a quarrel in any other family; and the mother's anxiety, though soothed, was not dispelled. Whither would this friendship, which might demand and imperil her boy's life, ultimately lead him? How could she, the Baroness, have reason to bless Mademoiselle des Touches? These two questions were as all-important to her simple soul as the maddest revolution can be to a diplomatist. Camille Maupin was a revolution in the quiet and simple home.

"I am very much afraid that this woman will spoil him for us," said she, taking up the newspaper again.

"My dear Fanny," said the old Baron, with knowing sprightliness, "you are too completely an angel to understand such things. Mademoiselle des Touches is, they say, as black as a crow, as strong as a Turk, and she is forty—our dear boy was sure to be attracted by her. He will tell a few very honorable fibs to conceal his happiness. Let him enjoy the illusions of his first love."

"If it were any other woman——"

"But, dearest Fanny, if the woman were a saint, she would not make your son welcome."

The Baroness went back to the paper.

"I will go to see her," said the old man, "and tell you what I think of her."

The speech has no point but in retrospect. After hearing the history of Camille Maupin, you may imagine the Baron face to face with this famous woman.

The town of Guérande, which for two months past had seen Calyste—its flower and its pride—going every day, morning

or evening—sometimes both morning and evening—to les Touches, supposed that Mademoiselle des Touches was passionately in love with the handsome lad, and did her utmost to bewitch him. More than one girl and one young woman wondered what was the witchcraft of an old woman that she had such absolute empire over the angelic youth. And so, as Calyste crossed the High street to go out by the gate to le Croisic, more than one eye looked anxiously after him.

It now becomes necessary to account for the reports that were current concerning the personage whom Calyste was going to see. These rumors, swelled by Breton gossip and envenomed by the ignorance of the public, had reached even the curé. The tax-receiver, the justice of the peace, the head clerk of the customs at Saint-Nazaire, and other literate persons in the district, had not reassured the abbé by telling him of the eccentric life led by the woman and artist hidden under the name of Camille Maupin.

She had not yet come to eating little children, to killing her slaves, like Cleopatra, to throwing men into the river, as the heroine of the "Tour de Nesle" is falsely accused of doing; still, to the Abbé Grimont, this monstrous creature, at once a siren and an atheist, was a most immoral combination of woman and philosopher, and fell short of every social law laid down to control or utilize the weaknesses of the fair sex. Just as Clara Gazul is the feminine pseudonym of a clever man and George Sand that of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which a charming girl long hid herself—a Bretonne named Félicité des Touches, she who was now giving the Baronne du Guénic and the worthy Curé of Guérande so much cause for anxiety. This family has no connection with that of the des Touches of Touraine, to which the Regent's ambassador belongs, a man more famous now for his literary talents than for his diplomacy.

Camille Maupin, one of the few famous women of the nine-

teenth century, was long supposed to be really a man, so manly was her first appearance as an author. Everybody is now familiar with the two volumes of dramas, impossible to put on the stage, written in the manner of Shakespeare or of Lopez de Vega, and brought out in 1822, which caused a sort of literary revolution when the great question of Romanticism *versus* Classicism was a burning one in the papers, at clubs, and at the Académie. Since then Camille Maupin has written several plays and a novel which have not belied the success of her first efforts, now rather too completely forgotten, except by literati.

An explanation of the chain of circumstances by which a girl assumed a masculine incarnation—by which Félicité des Touches made herself a man and a writer—of how, more fortunate than Madame de Staël, she remained free, and so was more readily excused for her celebrity—will, no doubt, satisfy much curiosity, and justify the existence of one of those monstrosities which stand up among mankind like monuments, their fame being favored by their rarity—for in twenty centuries scarcely twenty great women are to be counted. Hence, though she here plays but a secondary part, as she had great influence over Calyste, and is a figure in the literary history of the time, no one will be sorry if we pause to study her for a rather longer time than modern fiction usually allows.

In 1793 Mademoiselle Félicité des Touches found herself an orphan. Thus her estates escaped the confiscation which no doubt would have fallen on her father or brother. Her father died on the 10th of August, killed on the palace steps among the defenders of the King, on whom he was in waiting as major of the bodyguard. Her brother, a young member of the corps, was massacred at les Carmes. Mademoiselle des Touches was but two years old when her mother died of grief a few days after this second blow. On her death-bed Madame des Touches placed her little girl in the care of her

sister, a nun at Chelles. This nun, Madame de Faucombe, very prudently took the child to Faucombe, an estate of some extent near Nantes, belonging to Madame des Touches, where she settled with three sisters from the convent. During the last days of the Terror, the mob of Nantes demolished the château and seized the sisters and Mademoiselle des Touches, who were thrown into prison under a false charge of having harbored emissaries from Pitt and from Coburg. The ninth Thermidor saved them. Félicité's aunt died of the fright; two of the sisters fled from France; the third handed the little girl over to her nearest relation, Monsieur de Faucombe, her mother's uncle, who lived at Nantes, and then joined her companions in exile.

Monsieur de Faucombe, a man of sixty, had married a young wife, to whom he left the management of his affairs. He busied himself only with archæology, a passion, or, to be accurate, a mania, which helps old men to think themselves alive. His ward's education was left entirely to chance. Félicité, little cared for by a young woman who threw herself into all the pleasures of the Emperor's reign, brought herself up like a boy. She sat with Monsieur de Faucombe in his library, and read whatever he might happen to be reading. Thus she knew life well in theory, and preserved no innocence of mind though virginal at heart. Her intelligence wandered through all the impurities of science while her heart remained pure. Her knowledge was something amazing, fed by her passion for reading and well served by an excellent memory. Thus, at eighteen, she was as learned as the authors of to-day ought to be before trying to write. This prodigious amount of study controlled her passions far better than a convent life, which only inflames a young girl's imagination; this brain, crammed with undigested and unclassified information, governed the heart of a child. Such a depravity of mind, absolutely devoid of any influence on her chastity of person, would have amazed a philosopher or an observer, if

any one at Nantes could have suspected the fine qualities of Mademoiselle des Touches.

The result was in inverse proportion to the cause: Félicité had no predisposition toward evil; she conceived of everything by her intelligence, but held aloof from the facts. She delighted old Faucombe and helped him in his works, writing three books for the worthy gentleman, who believed them to be his own, for his spiritual paternity also was blind. Such severe work, out of harmony with the development of her girlhood, had its natural effect: Félicité fell ill, there was a fever in her blood, her lungs were threatened with inflammation. The doctors ordered her horse-exercise and social amusements. Mademoiselle des Touches became a splendid horsewoman, and had recovered in a few months.

At eighteen she made her appearance in the world, where she produced such a sensation that at Nantes she was never called anything but the beautiful Mademoiselle des Touches. But the adoration of which she was the object left her insensible, and she had come to this by the influence of one of the sentiments which are imperishable in a woman, however superior she may be. Snubbed by her aunt and cousins, who laughed at her studies and made fun of her distant manners, assuming that she was incapable of being attractive, Félicité aimed at being light and coquettish—in short, a woman. She had expected to find some interchange of ideas, some fascination on a level with her own lofty intelligence; she was disgusted by the commonplaces of ordinary conversation and the nonsense of flirtation; above all, she was provoked by the aristocratic airs of the military, to whom at that time everything gave way.

She had, as a matter of course, neglected the drawing-room arts. When she found herself less considered than the dolls who could play the piano and make themselves agreeable by singing ballads, she aspired to become a musician. She retired into deep solitude and set to work to study unremittingly

under the guidance of the best master in the town. She was rich, she sent for Steibelt to give her finishing lessons, to the great astonishment of her neighbors. This princely outlay is still remembered at Nantes. The master's stay there cost her twelve thousand francs. She became at last a consummate musician. Later, in Paris, she took lessons in harmony and counterpoint, and composed two operas, which were immensely successful, though the public never knew her secret. These operas were ostensibly the work of Conti, one of the most eminent artists of our day; but this circumstance was connected with the history of her heart and will be explained presently. The mediocrity of provincial society wearied her so excessively, her imagination was full of such grand ideas, that she withdrew from all the drawing-rooms after reappearing for a time to eclipse all other women by the splendor of her beauty, to enjoy her triumph over the musical performers, and win the devotion of all clever people; still, after proving her power to her two cousins and driving two lovers to desperation, she came back to her books, to her piano, to the works of Beethoven, and to old Faucombe.

In 1812 she was one-and-twenty; the archæologist accounted to her for his management of her property; and from that time forth she herself controlled her fortune, consisting of fifteen thousand francs a year from les Touches, her father's estate; twelve thousand francs, the income at that time from the lands of Faucombe, which increased by a third when the leases were renewed; beside a capital sum of three hundred thousand francs saved by her guardian. Félicité derived nothing from her country training but an apprehension of money matters, and that instinct for wise administration which perhaps restores, in the provinces, the balance against the constant tendency of capital to centre in Paris. She withdrew her three hundred thousand francs from the bank where the archæologist had deposited them, and invested in consols just at the time of the disastrous retreat from Moscow. Thus

she had thirty thousand francs a year more. When all her expenses were paid she had a surplus of fifty thousand francs a year to be invested.

A girl of one-and-twenty, with such a power of will, was a match for a man of thirty. Her intellect had gained immense breadth and habits of criticism, which enabled her to judge sanely of men and things, art and politics. Thenceforward she purposed leaving Nantes; but old Monsieur Faucombe fell ill of the malady that carried him off. She was like a wife to the old man; she nursed him for eighteen months with the devotion of a guardian angel, and closed his eyes at the very time when Napoleon was fighting with Europe over the dead body of France. She therefore postponed her departure for Paris till the end of the war.

As a Royalist she flew to hail the return of the Bourbons to Paris. She was welcomed there by the Grandlieus, with whom she was distantly connected; but then befell the catastrophe of the 20th of March, and everything remained in suspense. She had the opportunity of seeing on the spot this last resurrection of the Empire, of admiring the "Grand Army" which came out on the Champ de Mars, as in an arena, to salute its Cæsar before dying at Waterloo. Félicité's great and lofty soul was captivated by the magical spectacle. Political agitations and the fairy transformations of the theatrical drama, lasting for three months, and known as the Hundred Days, absorbed her wholly, and preserved her from any passion, in the midst of an upheaval that broke up the Royalist circle in which she had first come out. The Grandlieus followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house at Mademoiselle des Touches' service.

Félicité, who could not accept a dependent position, bought for the sum of a hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the handsomest mansions in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, where she settled on the return of the Bourbons in 1815; the garden alone is worth two million francs now. Being accustomed to

act on her own responsibility, Félicité soon took the habit of independent action, which seems the privilege of men only. In 1816 she was five-and-twenty. She knew nothing of marriage; she conceived of it only in her brain, judged of it by its causes instead of observing its effect, and saw only its disadvantages. Her superior mind rebelled against the abdication which begins the life of a married woman; she keenly felt the preciousness of independence and had nothing but disgust for the cares of motherhood. These details are necessary to justify the anomalies that characterize Camille Maupin. She never knew father or mother, she was her own mistress from her childhood, her guardian was an old antiquary, chance placed her in the domain of science and imagination, in the literary world, instead of keeping her within the circle drawn by the futile education given to women—a mother's lectures on dress, on the hypocritical proprieties and man-hunting graces of her sex. And so, long before she became famous, it could be seen at a glance that she had never played the doll.

Toward the end of the year 1817 Félicité des Touches perceived that her face showed symptoms not indeed of fading, but of the beginning of fatigue. She understood that her beauty would suffer from the fact of her persistent celibacy; she was bent on remaining beautiful, for at that time she prized her beauty. Knowledge warned her of the doom set by Nature on her creations, which deteriorate as much by misapplication as by ignorance of her laws. The vision of her aunt's emaciated face rose before her and made her shudder. Thus placed between marriage and passion, she determined to remain free; but she no longer scorned the homage that she met with on all hands.

At the date when this story begins she was almost the same as she had been in 1817. Eighteen years had passed over her and left her still untouched; at the age of forty she might have called herself twenty-five. Thus a picture of her in 1836 will represent her as she was in 1817. Women who know under

what conditions of temperament and beauty a woman must live to resist the attacks of time will understand how and why Félicité des Touches enjoyed such high privileges, as they study a portrait for which the most glowing colors of the palette and the richest setting must be brought into play.

Brittany offers a singular problem in the predominance of brown hair, brown eyes, and a dark complexion, in a country so close to England, where the atmospheric conditions are so nearly similar. Does the question turn on the wider one of race or on unobserved physical influences? Scientific men will some day perhaps inquire into the cause of this peculiarity, which does not exist in the neighboring province of Normandy. Pending its solution, the strange fact lies before us that fair women are rare among the women of Brittany, who almost always have the brilliant eyes of Southerners; but, instead of showing the tall figures and serpentine grace of Italy or Spain, they are usually small, short, with neat, set figures, excepting some women of the upper classes which have been crossed by aristocratic alliances.

Mademoiselle des Touches, a thoroughbred Bretonne, is of medium height, about five feet, though she looks taller. This illusion is produced by the character of her countenance, which gives her dignity. She has the complexion which is characteristic of Italian beauty, pale olive by day, and white under artificial light; you might think it was animated ivory. Light glides over such a skin as over a polished surface, it glistens on it; only strong emotion can bring a faint flush to the middle of each cheek, and it disappears at once. This peculiarity gives her face the placidity of a savage. The face, long rather than oval, resembles that of some beautiful Isis in the bas-reliefs of Egina; it has the purity of a Sphinx's head, polished by desert fires, lovingly touched by the flame of the Egyptian sun. Her hair, black and thick, falls in plaited loops over her neck, like the head-dress with ridged double locks of the statues at Memphis, accentuating very

finely the general severity of her features. She has a full, broad forehead, bossy at the temples, bright with its smooth surface on which the light lingers, and moulded like that of a hunting Diana; a powerful, willful brow, calm and still. The eyebrows, strongly arched, bend over eyes in which the fire sparkles now and again like that of fixed stars. The white of the eye is not bluish, nor veined with red, nor is it pure white; its texture looks horny, still it is warm in tone; the black centre has an orange ring round the edge; it is bronze set in gold—but living gold, animated bronze. The pupil is deep. It is not, as in some eyes, lined, as it were, like a mirror, reflecting the light, and making them look like the eyes of tigers and cats; it has not that terrible fixity of gaze that makes sensitive persons shiver; but this depth has infinitude, just as the brightness of mirror-eyes has finality. The gaze of the observer can sink and lose itself in that soul, which can shrink and retire as rapidly as it can flash forth from those velvet eyes. In a moment of passion Camille Maupin's eye is superb; the gold of her glance lights up the yellowish white, and the whole flashes fire; but when at rest it is dull, the torpor of deep thought often gives it a look of stupidity; and when the light of the soul is absent, the lines of the face also look sad. The lashes are short, but as black and thick-set as the hair of an ermine's tail. The lids are tawny, and netted with fine red veins, giving them at once strength and elegance, two qualities hard to combine in women. All round the eyes there is not the faintest wrinkle or stain. Here again you will think of Egyptian granite mellowed by time. Only the cheek-bones, though softly rounded, are more prominent than in most women, and confirm the impression of strength stamped on the face.

Her nose, narrow and straight, has high-cut nostrils, with enough of passionate dilation to show the rosy gleam of their delicate lining; this nose is well set on to the brow, to which it is joined by an exquisite curve, and it is perfectly white to

the very tip—a tip endowed with a sort of proper motion that works wonders whenever Camille is angry, indignant, or rebellious. There especially—as Talma noted—the rage of irony of lofty souls finds expression. Rigid nostrils betray a certain shallowness. The nose of a miser never quivers, it is tightly set like his lips; everything in his face is as close shut as himself.

Camille's mouth, arched at the corners, is brightly red; the lips, full of blood, supply that living, impulsive carmine that gives them such infinite charm and may reassure the lover who might be alarmed by the grave majesty of the face. The upper lip is thin, the furrow beneath the nose dents it low down, like a bow, which gives peculiar emphasis to her scorn. Camille has no difficulty in expressing anger. This pretty lip meets the broader red edge of a lower lip that is exquisitely kind, full of love, and carved, it might be, by Phidias, as the edge of an opened pomegranate, which it resembles in color. The chin is round and firm, a little heavy, but expressing determination, and finishing well this royal, if not goddess-like, profile. It is necessary to add that below the nose the lip is faintly shaded by a down that is wholly charming; nature would have blundered if she had not there placed that tender smoky tinge.

The ear is most delicately formed, a sign of other concealed daintinesses. The bust broad, the bosom small but not flat, the hips slender but graceful. The slope of the back is magnificent, more suggestive of the Bacchus than of the Venus Callipyge. Herein we see a detail that distinguishes almost all famous women from the rest of their sex; they have in this a vague resemblance to men; they have neither the pliancy nor the freedom of line that we see in women destined by nature to be mothers; their gait is unbroken by a gentle sway. This observation is, indeed, two-edged; it has its counterpart in men whose hips have a resemblance to those of women—men who are cunning, sly, false, and cowardly.

Camille's head, instead of having a hollow at the nape of the neck, is set on her shoulders with a swelling outline without an inward curve, an unmistakable sign of power; and this neck, in some attitudes, has folds of athletic firmness. The muscles attaching the upper arm, splendidly moulded, are those of a colossal woman. The arm is powerfully modeled, ending in wrists of English slenderness and pretty delicate hands, plump and full of dimples, finished off with pink nails cut to an almond shape, and well set in the flesh. Her hands are of a whiteness which proclaims that all the body, full, firm, and solid, is of a quite different tone from her face. The cold, steadfast carriage of her head is contradicted by the ready mobility of the lips, their varying expression, and the sensitive nostrils of an artist.

Still, in spite of this exciting promise, not wholly visible to the profane, there is something provoking in the calmness of this countenance. The face is melancholy and serious rather than gracious, stamped with the sadness of constant meditation. Mademoiselle des Touches listens more than she speaks. She is alarming by her silence and that look of deep scrutiny. Nobody among really well-informed persons can ever have seen her without thinking of the real Cleopatra, the little brown woman who so nearly changed the face of the earth; but in Camille the animal is so perfect, so homogeneous, so truly leonine, that a man with anything of the Turk in him regrets the embodiment of so great a mind in such a frame, and wishes it were altogether woman. Every one fears lest he may find there the strange corruption of a diabolical soul. Do not cold analysis and positive ideas throw their light upon the passions in this unwedded soul? In her does not judgment take the place of feeling? Or, a still more terrible phenomenon, does she not feel and judge both together? Her brain being omnipotent, can she stop where other women stop? Has the intellectual powers left the affections weak? Can she be gracious? Can she condescend to the pathetic

trifles by which a woman busies, amuses, and interests the man she loves? Does she not crush a sentiment at once if it does not answer to the infinite that she apprehends and contemplates? Who can fill up the gulfs in her eyes?

We fear lest we should find in her some mysterious element of unsubdued virginity. The strength of a woman ought to be merely symbolical; we are frightened at finding it real. Camille Maupin is in some degree the living image of Schiller's Isis, hidden in the depths of the temple, at whose feet the priests found the dying gladiators who had dared to consult her. Her various "affairs," believed in by the world, and not denied by Camille herself, confirm the doubts suggested by her appearance. But perhaps she enjoys this calumny? The character of her beauty has not been without effect on her reputation; it has helped her, just as her fortune and position have upheld her in the midst of society. If a sculptor should wish to make an admirable statue of Brittany, he might copy Mademoiselle des Touches. Such a sanguine, bilious temperament alone can withstand the action of time. The perennially nourished texture of such a skin, as it were varnished, is the only weapon given to women by nature to ward off wrinkles, which in Camille are hindered also by the passivity of her features.

In 1817 this enchanting woman threw open her house to artists, famous authors, learned men, and journalists, the men to whom she was instinctively attracted. She had a drawing-room like that of Baron Gérard, where the aristocracy mingled with distinguished talents and the cream of Parisian womanhood. Mademoiselle des Touches' family connections and her fine fortune, now augmented by that of her aunt the nun, protected her in her undertaking—a difficult one in Paris—of forming a circle. Her independence was one cause of her success. Many ambitious mothers dreamed of getting her to marry a son whose wealth was disproportioned to the splendor of his armorial bearings. Certain peers of France, attracted

by her eighty thousand francs a year, and tempted by her splendid house and establishment, brought the strictest and most fastidious ladies of their family. The diplomatic world, on the lookout for wit and amusement, came and found pleasure there.

Thus Mademoiselle des Touches, the centre of so many interests, could study the different comedies which all men, even the most distinguished, are led to play by passion, avarice, or ambition. She soon saw the world as it really is, and was so fortunate as not to fall at once into such an absorbing love as engrosses a woman's intellect and faculties and prevents her wholesome judgment. Generally a woman feels, enjoys, and judges, each in turn; hence three ages, the last coinciding with the sad period of old age. To Félicité the order was reversed. Her youth was shrouded in the snows of science, the chill of thoughtfulness. This transposition also explains the oddity of her life and the character of her talents. She was studying men at the age when most women see but one; she despised what they admire; she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truth; she laughed at what makes them serious.

This contradictory state lasted a long time; it had a disastrous termination; it was her fate to find her first love, new-born and tender in her heart, at an age when women are required by nature to renounce love. Her first entanglement was kept so secret that no one ever knew of it. Félicité, like all women who believe in the commonsense of their feelings, was led to count on finding a beautiful soul in a beautiful body; she fell in love with a face and discovered all the foolishness of a lady's man, who thought of her merely as a woman. It took her some time to get over her disgust and this mad connection. Another man guessed her trouble, and consoled her without looking for any return, or at any rate he concealed his purpose. Félicité thought she had found the magnanimity of heart and mind that the dandy had lacked.

This man had one of the most original intellects of the day. He himself wrote under a pseudonym, and his first works revealed him as an admirer of Italy. Félicité must needs travel or perpetuate the only form of ignorance in which she remained. This man, a skeptic and a scoffer, took Félicité to study the land of art. This famous "Anonymous" may be regarded as Camille Maupin's teacher and creator. He reduced her vast information to order, he added to it a knowledge of the masterpieces of which Italy is full, and gave her that subtle and ingenious tone, epigrammatic and yet deep, which is characteristic of his talent—always a little eccentric in its expression—but modified in Camille Maupin by the delicate feeling and the ingenious turn natural to women; he inoculated her with a taste for the works of English and German literature, and made her learn the two languages while traveling.

At Rome, in 1820, Mademoiselle des Touches found herself deserted for an Italian. But for this disaster she might never have become really famous. Napoleon once said that Misfortune was midwife to Genius. This event also gave Mademoiselle des Touches at once and for ever the scorn of mankind, which is her great strength. Félicité was now dead and Camille was born.

She returned to Paris in the company of Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the libretti of two operas; but she had no illusions left, and became, though the world did not know it, a sort of female Don Juan—without either debts or conquests. Encouraged by success, she published the two volumes of dramas which immediately placed Camille Maupin among the anonymous celebrities. She told the story of her betrayed love in an admirable little romance, one of the masterpieces of the time. This book, a dangerous example, was compared and on a level with "Adolphe," a horrible lament, of which the counterpart was found in Camille's tale. The delicate nature of her literary disguise is not yet fully

understood; some refined intelligences still see nothing in it but the magnanimity that subjects a man to criticism and screens a woman from fame by allowing her to remain unknown.

In spite of herself, her reputation grew every day, as much by the influence of her Salon as for her repartees, the soundness of her judgment, and the solidity of her acquirements. She was regarded as an authority, her witticisms were repeated, she could not abdicate the functions with which Parisian society invested her. She became a recognized exception. The fashionable world bowed to the talent and the wealth of this strange girl; it acknowledged and sanctioned her independence; women admired her gifts and men her beauty. Indeed, her conduct was always ruled by the social proprieties. Her friendships seemed to be entirely Platonic. There was nothing of the authoress—the female author—about her; as a woman of the world Mademoiselle des Touches is delightful—weak at appropriate moments, indolent, coquettish, devoted to dress, charmed with the trivialities that appeal to women and poets.

She perfectly understood that after Madame de Staël there was no place in this century for a Sappho, and that no Ninon could exist in Paris when there were no great lords, no voluptuous court. She is the Ninon of intellect; she adores art and artists; she goes from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose-writer. She is full of a noble generosity that verges on credulity, so ready is she to pity misfortune and to disdain the fortunate. Since 1830 she has lived in a chosen circle of proved friends, who truly love and esteem each other. She dwells far removed from such turmoil as Madame de Staël's, and not less far from political conflict; and she makes great fun of Camille Maupin as the younger brother of George Sand,* of whom she speaks as "Brother Cain," for this new glory has killed her own. Mademoiselle

* See Preface.

des Touches admires her happier rival with angelic readiness, without any feeling of jealousy or covert envy.

Until the time when this story opens she had led the happiest life conceivable for a woman who is strong enough to take care of herself. She had come to les Touches five or six times between 1817 and 1834. Her first visit had been made just after her first disenchantment, in 1818. Her house at les Touches was uninhabitable; she sent her steward to Guérande, and took his little house at les Touches. As yet she had no suspicion of her coming fame; she was sad, she would see no one; she wanted to contemplate herself, as it were, after this great catastrophe. She wrote to a lady in Paris, a friend, explaining her intentions, and giving instructions for furniture to be sent for les Touches. The things came by ship to Nantes, were transhipped to a smaller boat for le Croisic, and thence were carried, not without difficulty, across the sands to les Touches. She sent for workmen from Paris, and settled herself at les Touches, which she particularly liked. She meant to meditate there on the events of life, as in a little private chartreuse.

At the beginning of winter she returned to Paris. Then the little town of Guérande was torn by diabolical curiosity; nothing was talked of but the Asiatic luxury of Mademoiselle des Touches. The notary, her agent, gave tickets to admit visitors to les Touches, and people came from Batz, from le Croisic, and from Savenay. This curiosity produced in two years the enormous sum for the gatekeeper and gardener of seventeen francs.

Mademoiselle did not come there again till two years later, on her return from Italy, and arrived by le Croisic. For some time no one knew that she was at Guérande, and with her Conti the composer. Her appearance at intervals did not greatly excite the curiosity of the little town of Guérande. Her steward and the notary at most had been in the secret of Camille Maupin's fame. By this time, however, new ideas

had made some little progress at Guérande, and several persons knew of Mademoiselle des Touches' double existence. The postmaster got letters addressed to "Camille Maupin, aux Touches."

At last the veil was rent. In a district so essentially Catholic, old-world, and full of prejudices, the strange life led by this illustrious and unmarried woman could not fail to start the rumors which had frightened the Abbé Grimont; it could never be understood; she seemed an anomaly.

Félicité was not alone at les Touches; she had a guest. This visitor was Claud Vignon, the haughty and contemptuous writer, who, though he has never published anything but criticism, has impressed the public and literary circles with an idea of his superiority. Félicité, who for the last seven years had made this writer welcome, as she had a hundred others—authors, journalists, artists, and people of fashion—who knew his inelastic temperament, his idleness, his utter poverty, his carelessness, and his disgust at things in general, seemed by her behavior to him to wish to marry him. She explained her conduct, incomprehensible to her friends, by her ambition and the horror she felt of growing old; she wanted to place the rest of her life in the hands of a superior man for whom her fortune might be a stepping-stone, and who would uphold her importance in the literary world. So she had carried off Claud Vignon from Paris to les Touches, as an eagle takes a kid in his talons, to study him and take some vehement step; but she was deceiving both Calyste and Claud—she was not thinking of marriage. She was in the most violent throes that can convulse a soul so firm as hers, for she found herself the dupe of her own intellect, and saw her life illuminated too late by the sunshine of love, glowing as it glows in the heart of a girl of twenty.

Now for a picture of Camille's "Chartreuse."

At a few hundred paces from Guérande the *terra firma* of Brittany ends and the salt-marshes and sand-hills begin. A

rugged road, to which vehicles are unknown, leads down a ravine to the desert of sands left by the sea as neutral ground between the waters and the land. This desert consists of barren hills, of "pans" of various sizes edged with a ridge of clay, in which the salt is collected, of the creek which divides the mainland from the island of le Croisic. Though in geography le Croisic is a peninsula, as it is attached to Brittany only by the strand between it and the Bourg de Batz, a shifting bottom which it is very difficult to cross, it may be regarded as an island. At an angle where the road from le Croisic to Guérande joins the road on the mainland stands a country house, inclosed in a large garden remarkable for its wrung and distorted pine trees—some spreading parasol-like at the top, others stripped of their boughs, and all showing red scarred trunks where the bark has been torn away. These trees, martyrs to the storm, growing literally in spite of wind and tide, prepare the mind for the melancholy and strange spectacle of the salt-marshes and the sand-hills looking like solidified waves.

The house, well built of schistose stone and cement held together by courses of granite, has no pretensions to architecture; the eye sees only a bare wall, regularly pierced by the windows; those on the second floor have large panes, on the first floor small quarries. Above the second floor there are lofts, under an enormously high-pointed roof, with a gable at each end, and two large dormers on each side. Under the angle of each gable a window looks out, like a Cyclops' eye, to the west over the sea, to the east at Guérande. One side of the house faces the Guérande road; the other the waste over which le Croisic is seen, and beyond that the open sea. A little stream escapes through an opening in the garden-wall on the side by the road to le Croisic, which it crosses, and is soon lost in the sand or in the little pool of salt-water inclosed by the sand-hills and marsh-land, being left there by the arm of the sea.

A few fathoms of roadway, constructed in this break in the soil, leads to the house. It is entered through a gate; the courtyard is surrounded by unpretentious rural outhouses—a stable, a coach-house, a gardener's cottage with a poultry-yard and sheds adjoining, of more use to the gatekeeper than to his mistress. The gray tones of this building harmonize delightfully with the scenery it stands in. The grounds are an oasis in this desert, on the edge of which the traveler has passed a mud-hovel, where custom-house officers keep guard. The house, with no lands, or rather of which the lands lie in the district of Guérande, derives an income of ten thousand francs from the marshes and from farms scattered about the mainland. This was the fief of les Touches, deprived of its feudal revenues by the Revolution. Les Touches is still a property; the marshmen still speak of the Castle, and they would talk of the Lord if the owner were not a woman. When Félicité restored les Touches, she was too much of an artist to think of altering the desolate-looking exterior which gives this lonely building the appearance of a prison. Only the gate was improved by the addition of two brick piers with an architrave, under which a carriage can drive in. The court-yard was planted.

The arrangement of the first floor is common to most country houses built a hundred years ago. The dwelling was evidently constructed on the ruins of a little castle perched there as a link connecting le Croisic and Batz with Guérande, and lording it over the marshes. A hall had been contrived at the foot of the stairs. The first room is a large wainscoted anteroom where Félicité has a billiard-table; next comes an immense drawing-room with six windows, two of which, at the gable-end, form doors leading to the garden, down ten steps, corresponding in the arrangement of the room with the door into the billiard-room and that into the dining-room. The kitchen, at the other end, communicates with the dining-room through the pantry. The staircase is between the billiard-

room and the kitchen, which formerly had a door into the hall; this Mademoiselle des Touches closed, and opened one to the courtyard.

The loftiness and spaciousness of the rooms enabled Camille to treat this first floor with noble simplicity. She was careful not to introduce any elaboration of detail. The drawing-room, painted gray, has old mahogany furniture with green silk cushions, white cotton window-curtains bordered with green, two consoles, and a round table; in the middle is a carpet with a large pattern in squares; over the huge chimney-place are an immense mirror and a clock representing Apollo's car, between candelabra of the style of the Empire. The billiard-room has gray cotton curtains, bordered with green, and two divans. The dining-room furniture consists of four large mahogany sideboards, a table, twelve mahogany chairs with horsehair seats, and some magnificent engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. From the middle of the ceiling hangs an elegant lamp such as were usual on the staircases of fine houses, with two lights. All the ceilings and the beams supporting them are painted to imitate wood. The old staircase, of wood with a heavy balustrade, is carpeted with green from top to bottom.

On the second floor were two sets of rooms divided by the staircase. Camille chose for her own those which look over the marshes, the sand-hills, and the sea, arranging them as a little sitting-room, a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a study. On the other side of the house she contrived two bedrooms, each with a dressing-closet and anteroom. The servants' rooms are above. The two spare rooms had at first only the most necessary furniture. The artistic luxuries for which she had sent to Paris she reserved for her own rooms. In this gloomy and melancholy dwelling, looking out on that gloomy and melancholy landscape, she wanted to have the most fantastic creations of art. Her sitting-room is hung with fine Gobelin tapestry, set in wonderfully carved frames. The

windows are draped with heavy antique stuffs, a splendid brocade with a doubly shot ground, gold and red, yellow and green, falling in many bold folds, edged with royal fringes and tassels worthy of the most splendid baldachins of the church. The room contains a cabinet which her agent found for her, worth seven or eight thousand francs now, a table of carved ebony, a writing bureau, brought from Venice, with a hundred drawers, inlaid with arabesques of ivory, and some beautiful Gothic furniture. There are pictures and statuettes, the best that an artist friend could select in the old curiosity shops, where the dealers never suspected in 1818 the price their treasures would afterward fetch. On her tables stand fine Chinese vases of grotesque designs. The carpet is Persian, smuggled in across the sand-hills.

Her bedroom is in the Louis XV. style, and a perfectly exact imitation. Here we have the carved wooden bedstead, painted white, with the arched head and side, and figures of Loves throwing flowers, the lower part stuffed and upholstered in brocaded silk, the crown above decorated with four bunches of feathers; the walls are hung with India chintz draped with silk cords and knots. The fireplace is finished with rustic work; the clock of ormolu, between two large vases of the choicest blue Sèvres mounted in gilt copper; the mirror is framed to match. The Pompadour toilet-table has its lace hangings and its glass; and then there is all the fanciful small furniture, the *duchesses*, the couch, the little formal settee, the easy-chair with a quilted back, the lacquer screen, the curtains of silk to match the chairs, lined with pink satin and draped with thick ropes; the carpet woven at la Savonnerie—in short, all the elegant, rich, sumptuous, and fragile things among which the ladies of the eighteenth century made love.

The study, absolutely modern, in contrast with the gallant suggestiveness of the days of Louis XV., has pretty mahogany furniture. The bookshelves are full; it looks like a boudoir; there is a divan in it. It is crowded with the dainty trifles

that women love: books that lock up, boxes for handkerchiefs and gloves; pictured lamp-shades, statuettes, Chinese grotesques, writing-cases, two or three albums, paper-weights; in short, every fashionable toy. The curious visitor notes with uneasy surprise a pair of pistols, a narghileh, a riding-whip, a hammock, a pipe, a fowling-piece, a blouse, some tobacco, and a soldier's knapsack—a motley collection characteristic of Félicité.

Every lofty soul on looking around must be struck by the peculiar beauty of the landscape that spreads its breadth beyond the grounds, the last vegetation of the continent. Those dismal squares of brackish water, divided by little, white dykes on which the marshman walks, all in white, to rake out and collect the salt and heap it up; that tract over which salt-vapors rise, forbidding birds to fly across, while they at the same time choke every attempt at plant-life; those sands where the eye can find no comfort but in the stiff evergreen leaves of a small plant with rose-colored flowers and in the Carthusian pink; that pool of sea-water, the sand of the dunes, and the view of le Croisic—a miniature town dropped like Venice into the sea; and beyond, the immensity of ocean, tossing a fringe of foam over the granite reefs to emphasize their wild forms—this scene elevates while it saddens the spirit, the effect always produced in the end by anything sublime which makes us yearn regretfully for unknown things that the soul apprehends at unattainable heights. Indeed, these wild harmonies have no charm for any but lofty natures and great sorrows. This desert, not unbroken, where the sunbeams are sometimes reflected from the water and the sand, whiten the houses of Batz, and ripple over the roofs of le Croisic with a pitiless dazzling glare, would absorb Camille for days at a time. She rarely turned to the delightful green views, the thickets, and flowery hedges that garland Guérande like a bride, with flowers and posies and veils and festoons. She was suffering dreadful and unknown misery.

As Calyste saw the weathercocks of the two gables peeping above the furze-bushes of the high-road and the gnarled heads of the fir trees, the air seemed to him lighter; to him Guérande was a prison, his life was at les Touches. Who cannot understand the attractions it held for a simple-minded lad?

His love, like that of Cherubino, which had brought him to the feet of a personage who had been a great idea to him before being a woman, naturally survived her inexplicable rejections. This feeling, which is rather the desire for love than love itself, had no doubt failed to elude the inexorable analysis of Camille Maupin, and hence, perhaps, her repulses, a nobleness of mind misunderstood by Calyste. And, then, the marvels of modern civilization seemed all the more dazzling here by contrast with Guérande, where the poverty of the Guénics was considered splendor. Here, spread before the ravished eyes of this ignorant youth, who had never seen anything but the yellow broom of Brittany and the heaths of la Vendée, lay the Parisian glories of a new world; just as here he heard an unknown and sonorous language. Calyste here listened to the poetical tones of the finest music, the amazing music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony vie with each other as equal powers, and singing and orchestration have achieved incredible perfection. He here saw the works of the most prodigal painting—that of the French school of to-day, the inheritor of Italy, Spain, and Flanders, in which talent has become so common that our eyes and hearts, weary of so much talent, cry out loudly for a genius. He here read those works of imagination, those astounding creations of modern literature, which produce their fullest effect on a fresh young heart. In short, our grand nineteenth century rose before him in all its magnificence as a whole—its criticism, its struggles for every kind of renovation, its vast experiments, almost all measured by the standard of the giant who nursed its infancy in his flag, and

sang it hymns to an accompaniment of the terrible bass of cannon.

Initiated by Félicité into all this grandeur, which perhaps escapes the ken of those who put it on the stage and are its makers, Calyste satisfied at les Touches the love of the marvelous that is so strong at his age, and that guileless admiration, the first love of a growing man, which is so wroth with criticism. It is so natural that flame should fly upward! He heard the light Parisian banter, the graceful irony which revealed to him what French wit should be, and awoke in him a thousand ideas that had been kept asleep by the mild torpor of home life. To him Mademoiselle des Touches was the mother of his intelligence, a mother with whom he might be in love without committing a crime. She was so kind to him: a woman is always adorably kind to a man in whom she has inspired a passion, even though she should not seem to share it.

At this very moment Félicité was giving him music lessons. To him the spacious rooms on the first floor, looking all the larger by reason of the skillful arrangement of the lawns and shrubs in the little park; the staircase, lined with masterpieces of Italian patience—carved wood, Venetian and Florentine mosaics, bas-reliefs in ivory and marble, curious toys made to the order of the fairies of the Middle Ages; the upper rooms, so cozy, so dainty, so voluptuously artistic, were all informed and living with a light, a spirit, an atmosphere, that were supernatural, indefinable, and strange. The modern world with its poetry was in strong contrast to the solemn patriarchal world of Guérande, and the two systems here were face to face. On one hand the myriad effects of art; on the other the simplicity of wild Brittany. No one, then, need ask why the poor boy, as weary as his mother was of the subtleties of *mouche*, always felt a qualm as he entered this house, as he rang the bell, as he crossed the yard. It is to be observed that these presentiments cease to agitate men of riper growth, inured to

the mishaps of life, whom nothing can surprise, and who are prepared for everything.

As he went in, Calyste heard the sound of the piano; he thought that Camille Maupin was in the drawing-room; but on entering the billiard-room he could no longer hear it. Camille was playing, no doubt, on the little upright piano, brought for her from England by Conti, which stood in the little drawing-room above. As he mounted the stairs, where the thick carpet completely deadened the sound of footsteps, Calyste went more and more slowly. He perceived that this music was something extraordinary. Félicité was playing to herself alone; she was talking to herself. Instead of going in, the young man sat down on a Gothic settle with a green velvet cushion, on the landing, beneath the window, which was artistically framed in carved wood stained with walnut-juice and varnished.

Nothing could be more mysteriously melancholy than Camille's improvisation; it might have been the cry of a soul wailing a *De profundis* to its God from the depths of the grave.

The young lover knew it for the prayer of love in despair, the tenderness of resigned grief, the sighing of controlled anguish.

Camille was amplifying, varying, and changing the introduction to the *cavatina*, "*Grâce pour toi, grâce pour moi*," from the fourth act of "Robert le Diable." Suddenly she began to sing the *scena* in heartrending tones, and broke off. Calyste went in and saw the reason of this abrupt ending. Poor Camille Maupin, beautiful Félicité, turned to him without affectation, her face bathed in tears, took out her handkerchief to wipe them away, and said simply—

"Good-morning."

She was charming in her morning dress; on her head was one of the red chenille nets at that time in fashion, from which the shining curls of her black hair fell on her neck. A very short pelisse formed a modern Greek tunic, showing

below it cambric trousers with embroidered frills, and the prettiest scarlet and gold Turkish slippers.

"What is the matter?" asked Calyste.

"He has not come back," she replied, standing up at the window and looking out over the sands, the creek, and the marshes.

This reply accounted for her costume. Camille, it would seem, was expecting Claud Vignon, and she was fretted as a woman who had wasted her pains. A man of thirty would have seen this. Calyste only saw that she was unhappy.

"You are anxious?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, with a melancholy that this boy could not fathom.

Calyste was hastily leaving the room.

"Well, where are you going?"

"To find him."

"Dear child!" said she, taking his hand, and drawing him to her with one of those tearful looks which to a young soul is the highest reward. "Are you mad? Where do you think you can find him on this shore?"

"I will find him."

"Your mother will suffer mortal anguish. Beside—stay. Come, I insist upon it," and she made him sit down on the divan. "Do not break your heart about me. These tears that you see are the tears we take pleasure in. There is a faculty in women which men have not: that of abandoning ourselves to our nerves by indulging our feelings to excess. By imagining certain situations, and giving way to the idea, we work ourselves up to tears, sometimes into a serious condition and real illness. A woman's fancies are not the sport of the mind merely, but of the heart. You have come at the right moment; solitude is bad for me. I am not deluded by the wish he felt to go without me to study le Croisic and its rocks, the Bourg de Batz, and its sands and salt-marshes. I knew he would spend several days over it instead of one. He

wished to leave us two alone; he is jealous, or rather he is acting jealousy. You are young; you are handsome."

"Why did you not tell me sooner? Must I come no more?" asked Calyste, failing to restrain a tear that rolled down his cheek, and touched Félicité deeply.

"You are an angel!" she exclaimed.

Then she lightly sang Mathilde's strain "Restez" out of "William Tell," to efface all gravity from this grand reply of a princess to her subject.

"He thus hopes," she added, "to make me believe in a greater love for me than he feels. He knows all the regard I feel for him," she went on, looking narrowly at Calyste, "but he is perhaps humiliated to find himself my inferior in this. Possibly, too, he has formed some suspicions of you and thinks he will take us by surprise. But, even if he is guilty of nothing worse than of wishing to enjoy the delights of this expedition in the wilds without me, of refusing to let me share his excursions, and the ideas the scenes may arouse in him, of leaving me in mortal alarms—is not that enough? His great brain has no more love for me than the musician had, the wit, the soldier. Sterne is right: names have a meaning, and mine is the bitterest mockery. I shall die without ever finding in a man such love as I have in my heart, such poetry as I have in my soul."

She sat with her arms hanging limp, her head thrown back on the cushion, her eyes dull with concentrated thought and fixed on a flower in the carpet. The sufferings of superior minds are mysteriously grand and imposing; they reveal immense expanses of the soul, to which the spectator's fancy adds yet greater breadth. Such souls share in the privilege of royalty, whose affections cling to a nation, and then strike a whole world.

"Why did you——?" began Calyste, who could not finish the sentence. Camille Maupin's beautiful, burning hand was laid on his, and eloquently stopped him.

"Nature has forsworn her laws by granting me five or six years of added youth. I have repelled you out of selfishness. Sooner or later age would have divided us. I am thirteen years older than he is, and that is quite enough!"

"You will still be beautiful when you are sixty!" cried Calyste heroically.

"God grant it!" she replied with a smile. "But, my dear child, I intend to love him. In spite of his insensibility, his lack of imagination, his cowardly indifference, and the envy that consumes him, I believe that there is greatness under those husks; I hope to galvanize his heart, to save him from himself, to attach him to me—— Alas! I have the brain to see clearly while my heart is blind."

She was appallingly clear as to herself. She could suffer and analyze her suffering, as Cuvier and Dupuytren could explain to their friends the fatal progress of their diseases and the steady advance of death. Camille Maupin knew passion as these two learned men knew anatomy.

"I came here on purpose to form an opinion about him; he is already bored. He misses Paris, as I told him; he is homesick for something to criticise. Here there is no author to be plucked, no system to be undermined, no poet to be driven to despair; he dares not here rush into some excess in which he could unburden himself of the weight of thought. Alas! my love perhaps is not true enough to refresh his brain. In short, I cannot intoxicate him! To-night you and he must get drunk together; I shall say I am ailing, and stay in my room; I shall know if I am mistaken."

Calyste turned as red as a cherry, red from his chin to his hair, and his ears tingled with the glow.

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "and here am I depraving your maiden innocence without thinking of what I was doing! Forgive me, Calyste. When you love you will know that you would try to set the Seine on fire to give the least pleasure to 'the object of your affections,' as the fortune-tellers say."

She paused.

"There are some proud and logical spirits," she went on, "who at a certain age can exclaim, 'If I could live my life again, I would do everything the same.' Now I—and I do not think myself weak—I say, 'I would be such a woman as your mother.'

"To have a Calyste of my own! What happiness! If I had the greatest fool on earth for a husband, I should have been a humble and submissive wife. And yet I have not sinned against society, I have only hurt myself. Alas! dear child, a woman can no longer go into society unprotected excepting in what is called a primitive state. The affections that are not in harmony with social or natural laws, the affections which are not binding, in short, evade us. If I am to suffer for suffering's sake, I might as well be useful. What do I care for the children of my Faucombe cousins, who are no longer Faucombes, whom I have not seen for twenty years, and who married merchants only! You are a son who has cost me none of the cares of motherhood; I shall leave you my fortune and you will be happy, at any rate so far as that is concerned, by my act, dear jewel of beauty and sweetness, which nothing should ever change or fade!"

As she spoke these words in a deep voice, her eyelids fell that he should not read her eyes.

"You have never chosen to accept anything from me," said Calyste. "I shall restore your fortune to your heirs."

"Child!" said Camille in her rich tones, while the tears fell down her beautiful cheeks, "can nothing save me from myself?"

"You have a story to tell me, and a letter to——" the generous boy began, to divert her from her distress. But she interrupted him before he could finish the sentence.

"You are right. I must, above all things, keep my word. It was too late yesterday; but we shall have time enough to-day, it would seem," she said in a half-playful, half-bitter

tone. "To fulfill my promise, I will sit where I can look down the road to the cliffs."

Calyste placed a deep Gothic armchair, where she could look out in that direction, and opened the window. Camille Maupin, who shared the Oriental tastes of the more illustrious writer of her own sex, took out a magnificent Persian narghileh that an ambassador had given her; she filled it with patchouli leaves, cleaned the mouthpiece, scented the quill before she inserted it—it would serve her but once—put a match to the dried leaves, placed the handsome instrument of pleasure, with its long-necked bowl of blue-and-gold enamel, at no great distance, and then rang for tea.

"If you would like a cigarette? Ah! I always forget that you do not smoke. Such immaculateness as yours is rare! I feel as though only the fingers of an Eve fresh from the hand of God ought to caress the downy satin of your cheeks."

Calyste reddened and sat down on a stool; he did not observe the deep emotion that made Camille blush.

"The person from whom I yesterday received this letter, and who will perhaps be here to-morrow, is the Marquise de Rochefide," said Félicité. "After getting his eldest daughter married to a Portuguese grandee who had settled in France, old Rochefide, whose family is not so old as yours, wanted to connect his son with the highest nobility, so as to procure for him a peerage he had failed to obtain for himself. The Comtesse de Montcornet told him that in the department of the Orne there was a certain Mademoiselle Beatrix Maximilienne Rose de Casteran, the youngest daughter of the Marquis de Casteran, who wanted to get his two daughters off his hands without any money, so as to leave his whole fortune to his son, the Comte de Casteran. The Casterans, it would seem, are descended direct from Adam.

"Beatrix, born and brought up in the château of Casteran, at the time of her marriage, in 1828, was twenty years of age.

She was remarkable for what you provincials call eccentricity, which is simply a superior mind, enthusiasm, a sense of the beautiful, and a fervid feeling for works of art. Take the word of a poor woman who has trusted herself on these slopes, there is nothing more perilous for a woman; if she tries them, she arrives where you see me, and where the Marquise is—in an abyss. Men only have the staff that can be a support on the edge of those precipices, a strength which we lack, or which makes us monsters if we have it.

"Her old grandmother, the dowager Marquise de Casteran, was delighted to see her marry a man whose superior she would certainly be in birth and mind. The Rochefides did everything extremely well, Beatrix could but be satisfied; and in the same way Rochefide had every reason to be pleased with the Casterans, who, as connected with the Verneuils, the d'Esgrignons, and the Troisvilles, obtained the peerage for their son-in-law as one of the last batch made by Charles X., though it was annulled by a decree of the Revolution of July.

"Rochefide is a fool; however, he began by having a son; and, as he gave his wife no respite and almost killed her with his company, she soon had enough of him. The early days of married life are a rock of danger for small minds as for great passions. Rochefide, being a fool, mistook his wife's ignorance for coldness; he regarded Beatrix as a lymphatic creature—she is very fair—and thereupon lulled himself into perfect security and led a bachelor life, trusting to the Marquise's supposed coldness, her pride, her haughtiness, and the splendor of a style of living which surrounds a woman in Paris with a thousand barriers. When you go there you will understand what I mean. Those who hoped to take advantage of his easy indifference would say to him, 'You are a lucky fellow. You have a heartless wife, whose passions will all be in her brain; she is content with shining; her fancies are purely artistic; her jealousy and wishes will be amply satisfied if she can form a Salon where all the wits and talents meet; she will have

debauches of music, orgies of literature.' And the husband took in all this nonsense with which simpletons are stuffed in Paris.

"At the same time, Rochefide is not a common idiot; he has as much vanity and pride as a clever man, with this difference, that clever men assume some modesty and become cats; they coax to be coaxed in return; whereas Rochefide has a fine flourishing conceit, rosy and plump, that admires itself in public, and is always smiling. His vanity rolls in the stable and feeds noisily from the manger, tugging out the hay. He has faults such as are known only to those who are in a position to judge him intimately, which are noticeable only in the shade and mystery of private life, while in society and to society the man seems charming. Rochfide must have been intolerable the moment he fancied that his hearth and home were threatened; for his is that cunning and squalid jealousy that is brutal when it is aroused, cowardly for six months, and murderous the seventh. He thought he deceived his wife, and he feared her—two reasons for tyranny if the day should come when he discerned that his wife was so merciful as to affect indifference to his infidelities.

"I have analyzed his character to explain Beatrix's conduct. The Marquise used to admire me greatly; but there is but one step from admiration to jealousy. I have one of the most remarkable Salons of Paris; she wished to have one and tried to win away my circle. I have not the art of keeping those who wish to leave me. She has won such superficial persons as are everybody's friends from vacuity, and whose object is always to go out of a room as soon as they have come in; but she has not had time to make a circle. At that time I supposed that she was consumed with the desire of any kind of celebrity. Nevertheless, she had some greatness of soul, a royal pride, ideas, and a wonderful gift of apprehending and understanding everything. She will talk of metaphysics and of music, of theology and of painting. You will see her as a

woman what we saw her as a bride; but she is not without a little conceit; she gives herself too much the air of knowing difficult things—Chinese or Hebrew, of having ideas about hieroglyphics, and of being able to explain the papyrus that wraps a mummy.

"Beatrix is one of those fair women by whom fair Eve would look like a negress. She is as tall and straight as a taper and as white as the holy wafer; she has a long pointed face and a very variable complexion, to-day as colorless as cambric, to-morrow dull and mottled under the skin with a myriad tiny specks, as though the blood had left dust there in the course of the night. Her forehead is grand, but a little too bold; her eyes, pale aquamarine-tinted, floating in the white cornea under colorless eyebrows and indolent lids. There is often a dark circle around her eyes. Her nose, curved to a quarter of a circle, is pinched at the nostrils and full of refinement, but it is impertinent. She has the Austrian mouth, the upper lip thicker than the lower, which has a scornful droop. Her pale cheeks only flush under some very strong emotion. Her chin is rather fat; mine is not thin; and perhaps I ought not to tell you that women with a fat chin are exacting in love affairs. She has one of the most beautiful figures I ever saw; a back of dazzling whiteness, which used to be very flat, but which now, I am told, has filled out and grown dimpled; but the bust is not so fine as the shoulders; her arms are still thin. However, she has a mien and a freedom of manner which redeem all her defects and throw her beauties into relief. Nature has bestowed on her that air, as of a princess, which can never be acquired, which becomes her and at once reveals the woman of birth; it is in harmony with the slender hips of exquisite form, with the prettiest foot in the world, and the abundant angel-like hair, resembling waves of light, such as Girodet's brush has so often painted.

"Without being faultlessly beautiful or pretty, when she

chooses she can make an indelible impression. She has only to dress in cherry-colored velvet, with lace frillings, and red roses in her hair, to be divine. If on any pretext Beatrix could dress in the costume of a time when women wore pointed stomachers laced with ribbon, rising, slender and fragile-looking, from the padded fulness of brocade skirts set in thick deep pleats; when their heads were framed in starched ruffs, and their arms hidden under slashed sleeves with lace ruffles, out of which the hand appeared like the pistil from the cup of a flower; when their hair was tossed back in a thousand little curls over a knot held up by a network of jewels, Beatrix would appear as a successful rival to any of the ideal beauties you may see in that array."

Félicité showed Calyste a good copy of Mieris' picture in which a lady in white satin stands singing with a gentleman of Brabant, while a negro pours old Spanish wine into a glass with a foot, and a housekeeper is arranging some biscuits.

"Fair women," she went on, "have the advantage over us dark women of the most delightful variety; you may be fair in a hundred ways, but there is only one way of being dark. Fair women are more womanly than we are; we dark Frenchwomen are too like men. Well," she added, "do not be falling in love with Beatrix on the strength of the portrait I have given you, exactly like some prince in the 'Arabian Nights.' Too late in the day, my dear boy! But be comforted. With her the bones are for the first comer."

She spoke with meaning; the admiration expressed in the youth's face was evidently more for the picture than for the painter whose touch had missed its purpose.

"In spite of her being a blonde," she resumed, "Beatrix has not the delicacy of her coloring; the lines are severe, she is elegant and hard; she has the look of a strictly accurate drawing, and you might fancy she had southern fires in her soul. She is a flaming angel, slowly drying up. Her eyes look thirsty. Her front face is the best; in profile her face

looks as if it had been flattened between two doors. You will see if I am wrong.

"This is what led to our being such intimate friends: For three years, from 1828 to 1831, Beatrix, while enjoying the last gayeties of the Restoration, wandering through drawing-rooms, going to court, gracing the fancy-dress balls at the Élysée Bourbon, was judging men, things, and events from the heights of her intellect. Her mind was fully occupied. This first bewilderment at seeing the world kept her heart dormant, and it remained torpid under the first startling experiences of marriage—a baby—a confinement, and all the business of motherhood, which I cannot bear; I am not a woman so far as that is concerned. To me children are unendurable; they bring a thousand sorrows and incessant anxieties. I must say that I regard it as one of the blessings of modern society of which that hypocrite Jean-Jacques deprived us, that we were free to be or not to be mothers. Though I am not the only woman that thinks this, I am the only one to say it.

"During the storm of 1830 and 1831 Beatrix went to her husband's country house, where she was as much bored as a saint in his stall in paradise. On her return to Paris, the Marquise thought, and perhaps rightly, that the Revolution, which in the eyes of most people was purely political, would be a moral revolution too. The world to which she belonged had failed to reconstitute itself during the unlooked-for fifteen years of triumph under the Restoration, so it must crumble away under the steady battering ram of the middle class. She had understood Monsieur Lainé's great words, 'Kings are departing.' This opinion, I suspect, was not without its influence on her conduct.

"She sympathized intellectually with the new doctrines which, for three years after that July, swarmed into life like flies in the sunshine, and which turned many women's heads; but, like all the nobility, though she thought the new ideas

magnificent, she wished to save the nobility. Finding no opening now for personal superiority, seeing the uppermost class again setting up the speechless opposition it had already shown to Napoleon—which, during the dominion of actions and facts, was the only attitude it could take, whereas, in a time of moral transition, it was equivalent to retiring from the contest—she preferred a happy life to this mute antagonism.

"When we began to breathe a little, the Marquise met at my house the man with whom I had thought to end my days —Gennaro Conti, the great composer, of Neapolitan parentage, but born at Marseilles. Conti is a very clever fellow and has gifts as a composer, though he can never rise to the highest rank. If we had not Meyerbeer and Rossini, he might perhaps have passed for a genius. He has this advantage over them, that he is as a singer what Paganini is on the violin, Liszt on the piano, Taglioni as a dancer—in short, what the famous Garat was, of whom he reminds those who ever heard that singer. It is not a voice, my dear boy, it is a soul. When that singing answers to certain ideas, certain indescribable moods in which a woman sometimes finds herself, if she hears Gennaro she is lost. The Marquise fell madly in love with him and won him from me. It was excessively provincial, but fair warfare. She gained my esteem and friendship by her conduct toward me. She fancied I was the woman to fight for my possession; she could not tell that in my eyes the most ridiculous thing in the world under such circumstances is the subject of the contest. She came to see me. The woman, proud as she is, was so much in love that she betrayed her secret and left me mistress of her fate. She was quite charming; in my eyes she remained a woman and a marquise.

"I may tell you, my friend, that women are sometimes bad; but they have a secret greatness which men will never be able to appreciate. And so, as I may wind up my affairs as a woman on the brink of old age, which is awaiting me, I

will tell you that I had been faithful to Conti, that I should have continued faithful till death, and that nevertheless I knew him thoroughly. He has apparently a delightful nature, at bottom he is detestable. In matters of feeling he is a charlatan.

"There are men, like Nathan, of whom I have spoken to you, who are charlatans on the surface but honest. Such men lie to themselves. Perched on stilts, they fancy that they are on their feet, and play their tricks with a sort of innocence; their vanity is in their blood; they are born actors, swaggerers, grotesquely funny like a Chinese jar; they might even laugh at themselves. Their personal impulses are generous, and, like the gaudiness of Murat's royal costume, they attract danger.

"But Conti's rascality will never be known to any one but his mistress. He has as an artist that famous Italian jealousy which led Carlone to assassinate Piola and caused Paësiello a stiletto thrust. This terrible envy is hidden beneath the most charming good-fellowship. Conti has not the courage of his vice; he smiles at Meyerbeer and pays him compliments while he longs to rend him. He feels himself weak, and gives himself the airs of force; and his vanity is such that he affects the sentiments furthest from his heart. He assumes to be an artist inspired direct from heaven. To him Art is something sacred and holy. He is a fanatic; he is sublime in his fooling of fashionable folk; his eloquence seems to flow from the deepest convictions. He is a seer, a demon, a god, an angel. In short, though I have warned you, Calyste, you will be his dupe. This southerner, this seething artist, is as cold as a well-rope.

"You listen to him; the artist is a missionary, Art is a religion that has its priesthood and must have its martyrs. Once started, Gennaro mounts to the most disheveled pathos that ever a German philosopher spouted out on his audience. You admire his convictions—he believes in nothing. He

carries you up to heaven by a song that seems to be some mysterious fluid, flowing with love; he gives you a glance of ecstasy; but he keeps an eye on your admiration; he is asking himself, 'Am I really a god to these people?' And in the same instant he is perhaps saying to himself, 'I have eaten too much macaroni.' You fancy he loves you—he hates you; and you do not know why. But I always knew. He had seen some woman the day before, loved her for a whim, insulted me with false love, with hypocritical kisses, making me pay dearly for his feigned fidelity. In short, he is insatiable for applause; he shams everything and trifles with everything; he can act joy as well as grief, and he succeeds to perfection. He can please, he is loved, he can get admiration whenever he chooses.

"I left him hating his voice; he owed it more success than he could get from his talent as a composer; and he would rather be a man of genius like Rossini than a performer as fine as Rubini. I had been so foolish as to attach myself to him, and I would have decked the idol to the last. Conti, like many artists, is very dainty and likes his ease and his little enjoyments; he is dandified, elegant, well dressed; well, I humored all his manias, I loved that weak but astute character. I was envied, and I sometimes smiled with disdain. I respected his courage; he is brave, and bravery, it is said, is the only virtue which no hypocrisy can simulate. On one occasion, when traveling, I saw him put to the test; he was ready to risk his life—and he loves it; but, strange to say, in Paris I have known him guilty of what I call mental cowardice.

"My dear boy, I knew all this. I said to the poor Marquise, 'You do not know what a gulf you are setting foot in; you are the Perseus of a hapless Andromeda; you are rescuing me from the rock. If he loves you, so much the better; but I doubt it, he loves no one but himself.'

"Gennaro was in the seventh heaven of pride. I was no

marquise, I was not born a Casteran ; I was forgotten in a day. I allowed myself the fierce pleasure of studying this character to its depths. Certain of what the end would be, I meant to watch Conti's contortions. My poor boy, in one week I saw horrors of sentimentality, hideous manœuvring ! I will tell you no more ; you will see the man here. Only, as he knows that I know him, he hates me now. If he could safely stab me I should not be alive for two seconds.

"I have never said a word of this to Beatrix. Gennaro's last and constant insult is that he believes me capable of communicating my painful knowledge to the Marquise. He has become restless and absent-minded, for he cannot believe in good feeling in any one. He still performs for my benefit the part of a man grieved to have deserted me. You will find him full of the most penetrating cordiality ; he will wheedle, he will be chivalrous. To him every woman is a Madonna ! You have to live with him for some time before you detect the secret of that false frankness or know the stiletto prick of his humbug. His air of conviction would take in God. And so you will be enmeshed by his feline blandishments, and will never conceive of the deep and rapid arithmetic of his inmost mind. Let him be.

"I carried indifference to the point of receiving them together at my house. The consequence of this was that the most suspicious world on earth, the world of Paris, knew nothing of the intrigue. Though Gennaro was drunk with pride, he wanted, no doubt, to pose before Beatrix ; his dissimulation was consummate. He surprised me ; I had expected to find that he insisted on a stage-effect. It was she who compromised herself, after a year of happiness under all the vicissitudes and risks of Parisian existence.

"She had not seen Gennaro for some days and I had invited him to dine with me, as she was coming in the evening. Rochefide had no suspicions ; but Beatrix knew her husband so well, that, as she often told me, she would have preferred

the worst poverty to the wretched life that awaited her in the event of that man ever having a right to scorn or to torment her. I had chosen the evening when our friend the Comtesse de Montcornet was at home. After seeing her husband served with his coffee, Beatrix left the drawing-room to dress, though she was not in the habit of getting ready so early.

"'Your hairdresser is not here yet,' said Rochefide, when he heard why she was going.

"'Thérèse can do my hair,' she replied.

"'Why, where are you going? You cannot go to Madame de Montcornet's at eight o'clock.'

"'No,' said she, 'but I shall hear the first act at the Italian opera.'

"The catechising bailiff in Voltaire's 'Huron' is a silent man by comparison with an idle husband. Beatrix fled, to be no farther questioned, and did not hear her husband say, 'Very well; we will go together.'

"He did not do it on purpose; he had no reason to suspect his wife; she was allowed so much liberty! He tried never to fetter her in any way; he prided himself on it. And, indeed, her conduct did not offer the smallest hold for the strictest critic. The Marquis was going who knows where—to see his mistress perhaps. He had dressed before dinner; he had only to take up his hat and gloves when he heard his wife's carriage draw up under the awning of the steps in the courtyard. He went to her room and found her ready, but amazed at seeing him.

"'Where are you going?' said she.

"'Did I not tell you I would go with you to the opera?'

"The Marquise controlled the outward expression of intense annoyance; but her cheeks turned as scarlet as though she had used rouge.

"'Well, come then,' she replied.

"Rochefide followed her, without heeding the agitation

betrayed by her voice; she was burning with the most violent suppressed rage.

"'To the opera,' said her husband.

"'No,' cried Beatrix, 'to Mademoiselle des Touches'. I have a word to say to her,' she added when the door was shut.

"The carriage started.

"'But if you like,' Beatrix added, 'I can take you first to the opera and go to her afterward.'

"'No,' said the Marquis; 'if you have only a few words to say to her, I will wait in the carriage; it is only half-past seven.'

"If Beatrix had said to her husband, 'Go to the opera and leave me alone,' he would have obeyed her quite calmly. Like every clever woman, knowing herself guilty, she was afraid of rousing his suspicions, and resigned herself. Thus, when she gave up the opera to come to my house, her husband accompanied her. She came in scarlet with rage and impatience. She walked straight up to me, and said in a low voice, with the calmest manner in the world—

"'My dear Félicité, I shall start for Italy to-morrow evening with Conti; beg him to make his arrangements, and wait for me here with a carriage and passport.'

"Then she left with her husband. Violent passions insist on liberty at any cost. Beatrix had for a year been suffering from want of freedom and the rarity of their meetings, for she considered herself one with Gennaro. So nothing could surprise me. In her place, with my temper, I should have acted as she did. Conti's happiness broke my heart; only his vanity was engaged in this matter.

"'That is indeed being loved!' he exclaimed, in the midst of his transports. 'How few women would thus forego their whole life, their fortune, their reputation!'

"'Oh yes, she loves you,' said I; 'but you do not love her!'



AT THE UNEXPECTED SIGHT CALYSTE AND FÉLICITÉ SAT SILENT FOR A MINUTE.

"He flew into a fury and made a scene; he harangued, he scolded, he described his passion, saying he had never thought it possible that he could love so much. I was immovably cool, and lent him the money he might want for the journey that had taken him by surprise.

"Beatrix wrote a letter to her husband and set out for Italy the next evening. She stayed there two years; she wrote to me several times. Her letters are bewitchingly friendly; the poor child clings to me as the only woman that understands her. She tells me she adores me. Want of money compelled Gennaro to write an opera; he did not find in Italy the pecuniary resources open to a composer in Paris. Here is her last letter; you can understand it now if, at your age, you can analyze the emotions of the heart," she added, handing him the letter.

At this moment Claud Vignon came in. At the unexpected sight Calyste and Félicité sat silent for a minute, she from surprise, he from vague dissatisfaction. Claud's vast, high, and wide forehead, bald at seven-and-thirty, was dark with clouds. His firm, judicious lips expressed cold irony. Claud Vignon is an imposing person, in spite of the changes in a face that was splendid and is now grown livid. From the age of eighteen to five-and-twenty he had a strong likeness to the divine young Raphael; but his nose, the human feature which most readily alters, has grown sharp; his countenance has, as it were, sunk under mysterious hollows, the outlines have grown puffy, and with a bad color; leaden grays predominate in the worn complexion, though no one knows what the fatigues can be of a young man, aged perhaps by crushing loneliness, and an abuse of keen discernment. He is always examining other men's minds, without object or system; the pickaxe of his criticism is always destroying, and never constructing anything. His weariness is that of the laborer, not of the architect.

His eyes, light blue and once bright, are dimmed with unconfessed suffering or clouded by sullen sadness. Dissipation has darkened the eyelids beneath the brows; the temples have lost their smoothness. The chin, most nobly moulded, has grown double without dignity. His voice, never very sonorous, has grown thin; it is not hoarse, not husky, but something between the two. The inscrutability of this fine face, the fixity of that gaze, cover an irresolution and weakness that are betrayed in the shrewd and ironical smile. This weakness affects his actions, but not his mind; the stamp of encyclopædic intellect is on that brow and in the habit of that face, at once childlike and lofty.

One detail may help to explain the eccentricities of this character. The man is tall and already somewhat bent, like all who bear a world of ideas. These tall, long frames have never been remarkable for tenacious energy, for creative activity. Charlemagne, Narses, Belisarius, and Constantine have been, in this particular, very noteworthy exceptions. Claud Vignon, no doubt, suggests mysteries to be solved. In the first place, he is at once very simple and very deep. Though he rushes into excess with the readiness of a courtesan, his mind remains unclouded. The intellect which can criticise art, science, literature, and politics is inadequate to control his outer life. Claud contemplates himself in the wide extent of his intellectual realm, and gives up the form of things with Diogenes-like indifference. Content with seeing into everything, understanding everything, he scorns material details; but, being beset with hesitancy as soon as creation is needed, he sees obstacles without being carried away by beauties, and, by dint of discussing means, he sits, his hands hanging idle, producing no results. Intellectually he is a Turk in whom meditation induces sleep. Criticism is his opium, and his harem of books has disgusted him with any work he might do.

He is equally indifferent to the smallest and to the greatest

things, and is compelled by the mere weight of his brain to throw himself into debauchery to abdicate for a little while the irresistible power of his omnipotent analysis. He is too much absorbed by the seamy side of genius, and you may now conceive that Camille Maupin should try to show him the right side.

The task was a fascinating one. Claud Vignon believed himself no less great as a politician than he was as a writer; but this Machiavelli of private life laughs in his sleeve at ambitious persons, he knows all he can ever know, he instinctively measures his future life by his faculties, he sees himself great, he looks obstacles in the face, perceives the folly of parvenus, takes fright or is disgusted, and lets the time slip by without doing anything. Like Étienne Lousteau, the feuilleton writer; like Nathan, the famous dramatic author; like Blondet, another journalist, he was born in the middle class to which we owe most of our great writers.

"Which way did you come?" said Mademoiselle des Touches, coloring with pleasure or surprise.

"In at the door," replied Claud Vignon drily.

"Well," she replied, with a shrug, "I know you are not a man to come in at the window."

"Scaling a balcony is a sort of cross of honor for the beloved fair."

"Enough!" said Félicité.

"I am in the way?" said Claud Vignon.

"Monsieur," said the guileless Calyste, "this letter——"

"Keep it; I ask no questions. At our age such things need no words," said he, in a satirical tone, interrupting Calyste.

"But, indeed, monsieur——" Calyste began indignantly.

"Be calm, young man; my indulgence for feelings is boundless."

"My dear Calyste," said Camille, anxious to speak.

"Dear?" said Vignon, interrupting her.

"Claud is jesting," Camille went on, addressing Calyste; "and he is wrong—with you who know nothing of Paris and its 'chaff.'"

"I had no idea that I was funny," said Vignon very gravely.

"By what road did you come? For two hours I have never ceased looking out toward le Croisic."

"You were not incessantly looking," replied Vignon.

"You are intolerable with your banter."

"Banter! I?"

Calyste rose.

"You are not so badly off here that you need leave," said Vignon.

"On the contrary," said the indignant youth, to whom Camille gave her hand, which he kissed instead of merely taking it, and left on it a scalding tear.

"I wish I were that little young man," said the critic, seating himself, and taking the end of the hookah. "How he will love!"

"Too much, for then he will not be loved," said Mademoiselle des Touches. "Madame de Rochefide is coming here."

"Good!" said Claud; "and with Conti?"

"She will stay here alone, but he is bringing her."

"Have they quarreled?"

"No."

"Play me a sonata by Beethoven; I know nothing of the music he has written for the piano."

Claud filled the bowl of the hookah with tobacco, watching Camille more closely than she knew; a hideous idea possessed him; he fancied that a straightforward woman believed she had duped him. The situation was a new one.

Calyste as he went away was thinking neither of Beatrix de Rochefide nor her letter; he was furious with Claud Vignon,

full of wrath at what he thought want of delicacy, and of pity for poor Félicité. How could a man be loved by that perfect woman and not worship her on his knees, not trust her on the faith of a look or a smile? After being the privileged spectator of the suffering Félicité had endured while waiting, he felt an impulse to rend that pale, cold spectre. He knew nothing himself, as Félicité had told him, of the sort of deceptive witticisms in which the satirists of the press excel. To him love was a human form of religion.

On seeing him cross the courtyard, his mother could not restrain a joyful exclamation, and old Mademoiselle du Guénic whistled for Mariotte.

"Mariotte, here is the child; give us the *lubine*."

"I saw him, mademoiselle," replied the cook.

His mother, a little distressed by the melancholy that sat on Calyste's brow, never suspecting that it was caused by what he thought Vignon's bad treatment of Félicité, took up her worsted work. The old aunt pulled out her knitting. The Baron gave up his easy-chair to his son and walked up and down the room as if to unstiffen his legs before taking a turn in the garden. No Flemish or Dutch picture represents an interior of richer tone or furnished with more happily suitable figures. The handsome youth, dressed in black velvet, the mother, still so handsome, and the two old folk, in the setting of ancient paneling, were the expression of the most touching domestic harmony.

Fanny longed to question Calyste, but he had taken Beatrix's letter out of his pocket—the letter which was, perhaps, to destroy all the happiness this noble family enjoyed. As he unfolded it, Calyste's lively imagination called up the Marquise dressed as Camille Maupin had fantastically described her.

From Beatrix to Félicité.

"GENOA, *July 2d.*

"I have not written to you, my dear friend, since our stay at Florence, but Venice and Rome took up all my time; and happiness, as you know, fills a large place in life. We are neither of us likely to take strict account of a letter more or less. I am a little tired; I insisted on seeing everything, and to a mind not easily satiated the repetition of pleasures brings fatigue. Our friend had great triumphs at the Scala, at the Fenice, and these last three days at the San Carlo. Three Italian operas in two years! You cannot say that love has made him idle.

"We have been warmly welcomed everywhere, but I should have preferred silence and solitude. Is not that the only mode of life that suits a woman in direct antagonism with the world? This was what I had expected. Love, my dear, is a more exacting master than marriage; but it is sweet to serve him. After having played at love all my life, I did not know that I must see the world again, even in glimpses, and the attentions paid me on all hands were so many wounds. I was no longer on an equal footing with women of the highest type. The more kindly I was treated, the more was my inferiority marked. Gennaro did not understand these subtleties, but he was so happy that I should have been graceless if I had not sacrificed such petty vanities to a thing so splendid as an artist's life.

"We live only by love, while men live by love and action —otherwise they would not be men. There are, however, immense disadvantages to a woman in the position in which I have placed myself; and you have avoided them. You have remained great in the face of the world which had no rights over you; you have perfect liberty, and I have lost mine. I am speaking only with reference to concerns of the heart, and not to social matters, which I have wholly sacri-

ficed. You might be vain and willful, you might have all the graces of a woman in love, who can give or refuse anything as she chooses; you had preserved the privilege of being capricious, even in the interest of your affection and of the man you might like. In short, you, even now, have still your own sanction; I have not the freedom of feeling which, as I think, it is always delightful to assert in love, even when the passion is an eternal one. I have not the right to quarrel in jest, which we women so highly and so rightly prize: is it not the line by which we sound the heart? I dare not threaten, I must rely for attractiveness on infinite docility and sweetness, I must be impressive through the immenseness of my love; I would rather die than give up Gennaro, for the holiness of my passion is its only plea for pardon.

"I did not hesitate between my social dignity and my own little dignity — a secret between me and my conscience. Though I have fits of melancholy, like the clouds which float across the clearest sky, to which we women like to give way, I silence them at once; they would look like regret. Dear me! I so fully understood the extent of my debt to him that I have equipped myself with unlimited indulgence; but hitherto Gennaro has not aroused my sensitive jealousy. Indeed, I cannot see how my dear great genius can do wrong. I am, my dear, rather like the devotees who argue with their God, for is it not to you that I owe my happiness? And you cannot doubt that I have often thought of you.

"At last I have seen Italy! As you saw it, as it ought to be seen, illuminated to the soul by love, as it is by its glorious sun and its masterpieces of art. I pity those who are incessantly fired by the admiration it calls for at every step when they have not a hand to clasp, a heart into which they may pour the overflow of emotions which then subside as they grow deeper. These two years are to me all my life, and my memory will have reaped a rich harvest. Did you not, as I did, dream of settling at Chiavari, of buying a palace at

Venice, a villa at Sorrento, a house at Florence? Do not all women who love shun the world? And I, for ever an outcast, could I help longing to bury myself in a lovely landscape, in a heap of flowers, looking out on the pretty sea, or a valley as good as the sea, like the valley you look on from Fiesole?

"But, alas, we are poor artists, and want of money is dragging the wanderers back to Paris again. Gennaro cannot bear me to feel that I have left all my luxury, and he is bringing a new work, a grand opera, to be rehearsed in Paris. Even at the cost of my love, I cannot bear to meet one of those looks from a woman or a man which would make me feel murderous. Yes! for I could hack any one to pieces who should condescend to pity me, should offer me the protection of patronage—like that enchanting Châteauneuf who, in the time of Henri III., I think, spurred her horse to trample down the Provost of Paris for some such offense.

"So I am writing to tell you that without delay I shall arrive to join you at les Touches, and wait for our Gennaro in that quiet spot. You see how bold I am with my benefactress and sister. Still, the magnitude of the obligation will not betray my heart, like some others, into base ingratitude.

"You have told me so much about the difficulties of the journey that I shall try to reach le Croisic by sea. This idea occurred to me on hearing that there was here a little Danish vessel, loaded with marble, which will put in at le Croisic to take up salt on its way back to the Baltic. By this voyage I shall avoid the fatigue and expense of traveling by post. I know you are not alone, and I am glad of it; I had some remorse in the midst of my happiness. You are the only person with whom I could bear to be alone without Conti. Will it not be a pleasure to you, too, to have a woman with you who will understand your happiness and not be jealous of it?

"Well, till our meeting! The wind is fair, and I am off, sending you a kiss."

"Well, well, she too knows how to love!" said Calyste to himself, folding up the letter, with a sad expression.

This sadness flashed on his mother's heart like a gleam lighting up an abyss. The Baron had just left the room. Fanny bolted the door to the turret, and returned to lean over the back of the chair in which her boy was sitting, as Dido's sister bends over her in Guérin's picture. She kissed his forehead and said—

"What is the matter, my child? what makes you unhappy? You promised to account to me for your constant visits to les Touches; I ought to bless its mistress, you say?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "She, my dear mother, has shown me all the defects of my education in these times, when men of noble birth must acquire personal merit if they are to restore their names to life again. I was as remote from my day as Guérande is from Paris. She has been, in a way, the mother of my intelligence."

"Not for that can I bless her!" said the Baroness, her eyes filling with tears.

"Mother," cried Calyste, on whose forehead the hot tears fell, drops of heartbroken motherhood, "mother, do not cry. Just now, when, to do her a pleasure, I proposed scouring the coast from the custom-house hut to the Bourg de Batz, she said to me, 'How anxious your mother would be!'"

"She said so! Then I can forgive her much," said Fanny.

"Félicité wishes me well," replied Calyste, "and she often checks herself from saying some of those hasty and doubtful things which artists let fall, so as not to shake my faith—knowing that it is not immovable. She has told me of the life led in Paris by youths of the highest rank, going from their country homes as I might from mine, leaving their family without any fortune, and making great wealth by the

force of their will and their intelligence. I can do what the Baron de Rastignac has done, and he is in the Ministry. She gives me lessons on the piano, she teaches me Italian, she has let me into a thousand social secrets of which no one has an inkling at Guérande. She could not give me the treasures of her love; she gives me those of her vast intellect, her wit, her genius. She does not choose to be a mere pleasure, but a light to me; she offends none of my creeds; she believes in the nobility, she loves Brittany——"

"She has changed our Calyste," said the old blind woman, interrupting him, "for I understand nothing of this talk. You have a fine old house over your head, nephew, old relations who worship you, good old servants; you can marry a good little Bretonne, a pious and well-bred girl who will make you happy, and you can reserve your ambitions for your eldest son, who will be three times as rich as you are if you are wise enough to live quietly and economically, in the shade and in the peace of the Lord, so as to redeem the family estates. That is as simple as a Breton heart. You will get rich less quickly, but far more surely."

"Your aunt is right, my darling; she cares as much for your happiness as I do. If I should not succeed in arranging your marriage with Miss Margaret, your uncle Lord Fitz-William's daughter, it is almost certain that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will leave her money to either of her nieces you may prefer."

"And there will be a few crown-pieces here," said the old aunt in a low mysterious voice.

"I! Marry at my age?" said he, with one of those looks which weaken a mother's reason. "Am I to have no sweet and crazy love-making? Am I never to tremble, thrill, flutter, fear, lie down under a pitiless gaze and presently melt it? May I never know the beauty that is free, the fancy of the soul, the clouds that fleet over the serene blue of happiness and that the breath of enjoyment blows away? May I

never stand under a gutter-spout without discovering that it is raining, like the lovers seen by Diderot? Shall I never hold a burning coal in the palm of my hand like the Duc de Lorraine? Shall I never climb a silken rope-ladder, nor cling to a rotten old trellis without feeling it yield? Am I never to hide in a closet or under a bed? Must I know nothing of woman but wifely surrender, or of love but its equitable lamplight? Is all my curiosity to be satiated before it is excited? Am I to live without ever feeling that fury of the heart which adds to a man's power? Am I to be a married monk? No! I have set my teeth in the Paris apple of civilization. Do you not perceive that by your chaste, your ignorant family habits you have laid the fire that is consuming me, and that I shall be burnt up before I can adore the divinity I see wherever I turn —in the green foliage and in the sand glowing in the sunshine, and in all the beautiful, lordly, and elegant women who are described in the books and poems I have devoured at Camille's? Alas! There is but one such woman in all Guérande, and that is you, mother! The lovely blue birds of my dreams come from Paris; they live in the pages of Lord Byron and Scott; they are Parisina, Effie, Minna! Or, again, that Royal Duchess I saw on the moors among the heath and broom, whose beauty sent my blood with a rush to the heart!"

These thoughts were clearer, more brilliant, more living, to the Baroness' eye than art can make them to the reader; she saw them in a flash shot from the boy's glance like the arrows from a quiver that is upset. Though she had never read Beaumarchais, she thought, as any woman would, that it would be a crime to make this Cherubino marry.

"Oh, my dear boy!" said she, taking him in her arms, pressing him to her, and kissing his beautiful hair—still her own—"marry when you please, only be happy. It is not my part to tease you."

Mariotte came to lay the table. Gasselin had gone out to

exercise Calyste's horse, for he had not ridden it these two months. The three women, the mother, the aunt, and Mariotte were of one mind, with the natural cunning of women, to make much of Calyste when he dined at home. Breton penuriousness, fortified by the memories and habits of childhood, tried to contend with the civilization of Paris so faithfully represented at les Touches, so close to Guérande. Mariotte tried to disgust her young master with the elaborate dishes prepared in Camille Maupin's kitchen, as his mother and aunt vied with each other in attentions to enmesh their child in the nets of their tenderness, and to make comparisons impossible.

"Ah, ha! You have a *lubine* (a sort of fish), Monsieur Calyste, and snipe, and pancakes such as you will never get anywhere but here," said Mariotte, with a knowing and triumphant air, as she looked down on the white cloth, a perfect sheet of snow.

After dinner, when his old aunt had settled down to her knitting again, when the curé of Guérande and the Chevalier du Halga came in, attracted by their game of *mouche*, Calyste went out to go back to les Touches, saying he must return Beatrix's letter.

Claud Vignon and Mademoiselle des Touches were still at table. The great critic had a tendency to greediness, and this vice was humored by Félicité, who knew how a woman makes herself indispensable by such attentions.

The dining-room, lately finished by considerable additions, showed how readily and how quickly a woman can marry the nature, adopt the profession, the passions, and the tastes of the man she loves or means to love. The table had the rich and dazzling appearance which modern luxury, seconded by the improvements in manufactures, stamps on every detail. The noble but impoverished house of du Guénic knew not the antagonist with whom it had to do battle, nor how large a

sum was needed to contend with the brand-new plate brought from Paris by Mademoiselle des Touches, with her china—thought good enough for the country—her fine linen, her silver-gilt, all the trifles on her table, and all the skill of her man-cook.

Calyste declined to take any of the liqueurs contained in one of the beautiful inlaid cases of precious woods, that might be shrines.

"Here is your letter," he said, with childish ostentation, looking at Claud, who was sipping a glass of West India liqueur.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Mademoiselle des Touches, tossing the letter across the table to Vignon, who read it, alternately lifting and setting down his glass.

"Why—that the women of Paris are very happy; they all have men of genius, who love them, to worship."

"Dear me, you are still but a rustic!" said Félicité, with a laugh. "What! You did not discover that she already loves him less, that——"

"It is self-evident!" said Claud Vignon, who had as yet read no more than the first page. "When a woman is really in love, does she trouble her head in the least about her position? Is she as finely observant as the Marquise? Can she calculate? Can she distinguish? Our dear Beatrix is tied to Conti by her pride; she is condemned to love him, come what may."

"Poor woman!" said Camille.

Calyste sat staring at the table, but he saw nothing. The beautiful creature in her fantastic costume, as sketched by Félicité that morning, rose before him, radiant with light; she smiled on him, she played with her fan, and her other hand, emerging from a frill of lace and cherry-colored velvet, lay white and still on the full folds of her magnificent petticoat.

"This is the very thing for you," said Claud Vignon, with a sardonic smile at Calyste.

Calyste was offended at the words *the very thing*.

"Do not suggest the idea of such an intrigue to the dear child; you do not know how dangerous such a jest may be. I know Beatrix; she has too much magnanimity of temper to change; beside, Conti will be with her."

"Ah!" said Claud Vignon satirically, "a little twinge of jealousy, heh?"

"Can you suppose it?" said Camille proudly.

"You are more clear-sighted than a mother could be," replied Claud.

"But I ask you, is it possible?" and she looked at Calyste.

"And yet," Vignon went on, "they would be well matched. She is ten years older than he is; he would be the girl."

"A girl, monsieur, who has twice been under fire in la Vendée. If there had but been twenty thousand of such girls——"

"I was singing your praise," said Vignon, "an easier matter than singeing your beard."

"I have a sword to cut the beards of those who wear them too long," retorted Calyste.

"And I have a tongue that cuts sharply too," replied Vignon, smiling. "We are Frenchmen—the affair can be arranged."

Mademoiselle des Touches gave Calyste a beseeching look, which calmed him at once.

"Why," said Félicité, to end the discussion, "why is it that youths, like my Calyste there, always begin by loving women no longer young?"

"I know of no more guileless and generous impulse," said Vignon. "It is the consequence of the delightful qualities of youth. And, beside, to what end would old women come if it were not for such love? You are young and handsome, and will be for twenty years to come; before you

we may speak plainly," he went on, with a keen glance at Mademoiselle des Touches. "In the first place, the semi-dowagers to whom very young men attach themselves know how to love far better than young women. A youth is too like a woman for a young woman to attract him. Such a passion is too suggestive of the myth of Narcissus. Beside this, there is, I believe, a common want of experience which keeps them asunder. Hence the reason which makes it true that a young woman's heart can only be understood by a man in whom long practice is veiled by his real or assumed passion is the same as that which, allowing for differences of nature, makes a woman past her youth more seductive to a boy; he is intensely conscious that he will succeed with her, and the woman's vanity is intensely flattered by his pursuit of her.

"Then, again, it is natural that the young should seize on fruit, and autumn offers many fine and luscious kinds. Is it nothing to meet those looks, at once bold and reserved, languishing at the proper moments, soft with the last gleams of love, so warm, so soothing? And the elaborate elegance of speech, the splendid ripe shoulders so finely filled out, the ample roundness, the rich and undulating plumpness, the hands full of dimples, the pulpy, well-nourished skin, the brow full of overflowing sentiment, on which the light lingers, the hair, so carefully cherished and dressed, where fine partings of white skin are delicately traced, and the throat with those fine curves, the inviting nape where every resource of art is applied to bring out the contrast between the hair and the tones of the flesh, to emphasize all the audacity of life and love? Dark women then get some of the tones of the fairest, the amber shade of maturity.

"Then, again, these women betray their knowledge of the world in their smiles, and display it in their conversation; they know how to talk; they will set the whole world before you to raise a smile; they have sublime touches of dignity and pride; they can shriek with despair in a way to break

your heart, wail a farewell to love, knowing that it is futile, and only resuscitates passion; they grow young again by dint of varying the most desperately simple things. They constantly expect to be contradicted as to the falling off they so coquettishly proclaim, and the intoxication of their triumph is contagious. Their devotion is complete; they listen; in short, they love; they clutch at love as a man condemned to death clings to the smallest trifles of living; they are like those lawyers who can urge every plea in a case without fatiguing the court; they exhaust every means in their power; indeed, perfect love can only be known in them.

"I doubt if they are ever forgotten, any more than we can forget anything vast and sublime.

"A young woman has a thousand other things to amuse her, these women have nothing; they have no conceit left, no vanity, no meanness; their love is the Loire at its mouth, immense, swelled by every disenchantment, every affluent of life, and that is why—my daughter is dumb!" he ended, seeing Mademoiselle des Touches in an attitude of ecstasy, clutching Calyste's hand tightly, perhaps to thank him for having been the cause of such a moment for her, of such a tribute of praise that she could detect no snare in it.

All through the evening Claud Vignon and Félicité were brilliantly witty, telling anecdotes and describing the life of Paris to Calyste, who quite fell in love with Claud, for wit exerts a peculiar charm on men of feeling.

"I should not be in the least surprised to see Madame de Rochefide land here to-morrow with Conti, who is accompanying her no doubt," said Claud at the end of the evening. "When I came up from le Croisic the seamen had spied a small ship, Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian."

This speech brought the color to Camille's cheeks, calm as she was.

That night, again, Madame du Guénic sat up for her son

till one o'clock, unable to imagine what he could be doing at les Touches if Félicité did not love him.

"He must be in the way," thought this delightful mother.

"What have you had to talk about so long?" she asked, as she saw him come in.

"Oh, mother! I never spent a more delightful evening. Genius is a great, a most sublime thing! Why did you not bestow genius on me? With genius a man must be able to choose the woman he loves from all the world; she must inevitably be his!"

"But you are handsome, my Calyste."

"Beauty has no place but in women. And, beside, Claud Vignon is fine. Men of genius have a brow that beams, eyes where lightnings play—and I, unhappy wretch, I only know how to love."

"They say that is all-sufficient, my darling," said she, kissing his forehead.

"Really, truly?"

"I have been told so. I have had no experience."

It was now Calyste's turn to kiss his mother's hand with reverence.

"I will love for all those who might have been your adorers," said he.

"Dear child, it is in some degree your duty; you have inherited all my feelings. So do not be rash; try to love only high-souled women, if you must love."

What young man, welling over with passion and suppressed vitality, but would have had the triumphant idea of going to le Croisic to see Madame de Rochefide land, so as to be able to study her, himself unknown? Calyste greatly amazed his father and mother, who knew nothing of the fair Marquise's arrival, by setting out in the morning without waiting for breakfast. Heaven knows how briskly the boy stepped out. He felt as if some new strength had come to his aid, he was

so light; he kept close under the walls of les Touches to avoid being seen. The delightful boy was ashamed of his ardor, and had perhaps a miserable fear of being laughed at; Félicité and Claud Vignon were so horribly keen-sighted! And, then, in such cases a youth believes that his forehead is transparent.

He followed the zigzag path across the maze of salt-marshes, reached the sands, and was across them with a skip and a hop, in spite of the scorching sun that twinkled on them.

This brought him to the edge of the strand, banked up with a breakwater, near which stands a house where travelers may find shelter from storms, sea-gales, rain, and the whirlwind. It is not always possible to cross the little strait, nor are there always boats, and it is convenient, while they are crossing from the port, to have shelter for the horses, asses, merchandise, or passengers' luggage. From thence men can scan the open sea and the port of le Croisic; and from thence Calyste soon discerned two boats coming, loaded with baggage—bundles, trunks, carpet-bags, and cases, of which the shape and size proclaimed to the natives the arrival of extraordinary things, such as could only belong to a voyager of distinction.

In one of these boats sat a young woman with a straw hat and green veil, accompanied by a man. This boat was the first to come to land. Calyste felt a thrill; but their appearance showed them to be a maid and a manservant, and he dared not question them.

"Are you crossing to le Croisic, Monsieur Calyste?" asked one of the boatmen, who knew him; but he replied only by a negative shake of the head, ashamed of having his name mentioned.

Calyste was enchanted at the sight of a trunk covered with waterproof canvas, on which he read MADAME LA MARQUISE DE ROCHEFIDE. The name glittered in his eyes like some talisman; it had to him a purport of mysterious doom; he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he should fall in love

with this woman; the smallest things relating to her interested him already, spurred his fancy and his curiosity. Why? In the burning desert of its immeasurable and objectless desires does not youth put forth all its powers toward the first woman who comes within reach? Beatrix had fallen heir to the love that Camille had disdained.

Calyste watched the landing of the baggage, looking out from time to time at le Croisic, hoping to see a boat come out of the harbor, cross to this little headland, and reveal to him the Beatrix who had already become to him what another Beatrix was to Dante, an eternal statue of marble on whose hands he would hang his flowers and wreaths. He stood with his arms folded, lost in the dream of expectancy. A thing worthy of remark, but which nevertheless has never been remarked, is the way in which we frequently subordinate our feelings to our will, how we pledge ourself to ourself as it were, and how we make our fate; chance has certainly far less share in it than we suppose.

"I see no horses," said the maid, sitting on a trunk.

"And I see no carriage-road," said the valet.

"Well, horses have certainly been here," replied the woman, pointing to their traces. "Monsieur," said she, addressing Calyste, "is that the road leading to Guérande?"

"Yes," said he, "whom are you expecting?"

"We were told that we should be met, fetched to les Touches. If they are very late, I do not know how madame can dress," said she to the man. "You had better walk on to les Touches. What a land of savages!"

It dawned on Calyste that he was in a false position.

"Then your mistress is going to les Touches?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle came to meet her at seven this morning," was the reply. "Ah! here come the horses."

Calyste fled, running back to Guérande with the swiftness and lightness of a chamois, and doubling like a hare to avoid being seen by the servants from les Touches; still, he met

two of them in the narrow way across the marsh which he had to cross.

"Shall I go in? Shall I not?" he asked himself as he saw the tops of the pine trees of les Touches.

He was afraid; he returned to Guérande, hang-dog and repentant, and walked up and down the mall, where he continued the discussion with himself.

He started as he caught sight of les Touches, and studied the weathercocks.

"She can have no idea of my excitement," said he to himself.

His wandering thoughts became so many grapnels that caught in his heart and held the Marquise there. Calyste had felt none of these terrors, these anticipatory joys with regard to Camille; he had first met her on horseback, and his desire had sprung up, as at the sight of a beautiful flower he might have longed to pluck. These vacillations constitute a sort of poem in a timid soul. Fired by the first flames of imagination, these souls rise up in wrath, are appeased, and eager by turns, and in silence and solitude reach the utmost heights of love before they have even spoken to the object of so many struggles.

Calyste saw from afar, on the mall, the Chevalier du Halga, walking with Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; he hid himself. The chevalier and the old lady, believing themselves alone on the mall, were talking aloud.

"Since Charlotte de Kergarouët is coming to you," said the chevalier, "keep her three or four months. How can you expect her to flirt with Calyste? She never stays here long enough to attempt it; whereas, if they see each other every day, the two children will end by being desperately in love, and you will see them married this winter. If you say two words of your plans to Charlotte, she will at once say four to Calyste; and a girl of sixteen will certainly win the day against a woman of forty-something!"

The two old folk turned to retrace their steps. Calyste heard no more, but he had understood what Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's plan was. In his present frame of mind nothing could be more disastrous. Is it in the fever of a preconceived passion that a young man will accept as his wife a girl found for him by others? Calyste, who cared not a straw for Charlotte de Kergarouët, felt inclined to repulse her. Considerations of money could not touch him; he had been accustomed from childhood to the modest style of his father's house; beside, seeing Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël live as poorly as the Guénics themselves, he had no notion of her wealth. And a youth brought up as Calyste had been would not, in any case, consider anything but feeling; and all his mind was set on the Marquise.

Compared with the portrait drawn by Camille, what was Charlotte? The companion of his childhood, whom he treated as his sister.

He did not get home until five o'clock. When he went into the room, his mother, with a melancholy smile, handed him a note from Mademoiselle des Touches, as follows:

"My dear Calyste:—The beautiful Marquise de Rochefide has arrived; we count on you to do honor to her advent. Claud, always satirical, declares that you will be Bice and she Dante. The honor of Brittany and of the Guénics is at stake when there is a Casteran to be welcomed. So let us meet soon. Yours,

"Camille Maupin.

"Come as you are, without ceremony, or we shall look ridiculous."

Calyste showed his mother the note, and went at once.

"What are these Casterans?" said she to the Baron.

"An old Norman family, related to William the Con-

queror," he replied. "Their arms are In tierce per fess azure gules and or, a horse rearing argent hoofed or. The beautiful creature for whom le Gars was killed at Fougères in 1800 was the daughter of a Casteran, who became a nun at Séez and was made abbess, after being thrown over by the Duc de Verneuil."

"And the Rochefides?"

"I do not know the name; I should want to see their arms," said he.

The Baroness was a little relieved at hearing that the Marquise Beatrix de Rochefide was of an old family; still, she felt some alarm at knowing that her son was exposed to fresh fascinations.

Calyste, as he walked, felt the most violent and yet delightful impulses; his throat was choked, his heart full, his brain confused; he was devoured by fever. He wanted to walk slower, but a superior power urged him on. All young men have known this perturbation of the senses caused by a vague hope: a subtle fire flames within and raises a halo, like the glory shown about the divine persons in a sacred picture, through which they see nature in a glow and woman radiant. Are they not, then, like the saints themselves, full of faith, ardor, hope, and purity?

The young Breton found the whole party in Camille's little private drawing-room. It was by this time nearly six o'clock; through the windows the sinking sun shed a ruddy light, broken by the trees; the air was still, the room was full of the soft gloom that women love so well.

"Here is the member for Brittany," said Camille Maupin, smiling to her friend, as Calyste lifted the tapestry curtain over the door. "As punctual as a king!"

"You recognized his step?" said Claud Vignon to Mademoiselle des Touches.

Calyste bowed to the Marquise, who merely nodded to him;

he had not looked at her. He shook hands with Claud Vignon, who offered him his hand.

"Here is the great man of whom you have heard so much, Gennaro Conti," Camille went on, without answering Claud Vignon.

She introduced to Calyste a man of middle height, thin and slender, with chestnut hair, eyes that were almost orange color, with a white, freckled skin; in short, so exactly the well-known head of Lord Byron that it would be superfluous to describe it—but perhaps he held it better. Conti was not a little proud of this resemblance.

"I am delighted, being but one day at les Touches, to meet monsieur," said Gennaro.

"It is my part to say as much to you," replied Calyste, with sufficient ease of manner.

"He is as handsome as an angel!" the Marquise said to Félicité. Calyste, standing between the divan and the two women, overheard the words, though spoken in a whisper. He moved to an armchair, and stole watchful looks at the Marquise. In the soft light of the setting sun he saw lounging on the divan, as though a sculptor had placed her in position, a white sinuous figure which seemed to dazzle his sight. Félicité, without knowing it, had served her friend well by her description.

Beatrix was superior to the not too flattering portrait drawn by Camille. Was it not partly for the stranger's benefit that Beatrix had placed in her splendid hair bunches of blue corn-flowers, which showed off the pale gleam of her ringlets, arranged to frame her face and flicker over her cheeks? Her eyes were set in circles darkened by fatigue, but only to the tone of the purest and most opalescent mother-of-pearl; her cheeks were as bright as her eyes. Under her white skin, as delicate as the silky lining of an egg-shell, life flushed in the purple blood. The finish of her features was exquisite; her brow seemed diaphanous. This fair and gentle head,

finely set on a long neck of marvelous beauty, lent itself to the most varying expression.

Her waist, slight enough to span, had a bewitching grace; her bare shoulders gleamed in the twilight like a white camellia in black hair. The bosom, well supported, but covered with a clear handkerchief, showed two exquisitely enticing curves. The India-muslin dress, white flowered with blue; the wide sleeves; the bodice, pointed and without any sash; the shoes with sandals crossed over fine thread stockings—all showed perfect knowledge of the arts of dress. Earrings of silver filigree, marvels of Genoese work which no doubt were coming into fashion, were admirably suited to the exquisite softness of the fair hair starred with cornflowers.

At a single eager glance Calyste took in all this beauty, which stamped itself on his soul. Beatrix, so fair, and Félicité, so dark, recalled the "Keepsake" contrasts, so much affected by English engravers and draughtsmen. They were woman's weakness and woman's strength in their utmost expression, a perfect antithesis. These two women could never be rivals; each had her empire. They were like a delicate pale periwinkle or lily by the side of a sumptuous and gorgeous red poppy, or a turquoise by a ruby. In an instant Calyste was possessed by a passion which crowned the secret working of his hopes, his fears, his doubts. Mademoiselle des Touches had roused his senses, Beatrix fired his mind and heart. The young Breton was conscious of the birth within himself of an all-conquering force that would respect nothing. And he shot at Conti a look of envy and hatred, gloomy, and full of alarms, a look he had never had for Claud Vignon.

Calyste called up all his resolution to restrain himself, thinking, nevertheless, that the Turks were very right to keep their women shut up, and that such beautiful creatures should be forbidden to show themselves in their tempting witcheries to young men aflame with love. This hot hurricane was

lulled as soon as Beatrix turned her eyes on him and her gentle voice made itself heard; the poor boy already feared her as he feared God.

The dinner-bell rang.

"Calyste, give your arm to the Marquise," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Conti on her right and Claud on her left, as she stood aside to let the young couple pass.

Thus to go down the old staircase of les Touches was to Calyste like a first battle; his heart failed him, he found nothing to say, a faint moisture stood on his brow and down his spine. His arm trembled so violently that at the bottom step the Marquise said to him—

"What is the matter?"

"Never," said he in a choked voice, "never in my life have I seen a woman so beautiful as you are, excepting my mother; and I cannot control my agitation."

"Why, have you not Camille Maupin here?"

"But what a difference!" said Calyste artlessly.

"Ha! Calyste," Félicité whispered in his ear; "did I not tell you that you would forget me as though I had never existed? Sit there, next her on the right, and Vignon on her left. As for you, Gennaro, I keep you by me," she added, laughing; "we will keep an eye on her flirtations."

The accent in which Camille spoke struck Claud, who looked at her with the wily and apparently absent glance, which in him showed that he was observant. He never once ceased watching Mademoiselle des Touches throughout dinner.

"Flirtations!" replied the Marquise, drawing off her gloves and showing her beautiful hands; "I have every excuse; on one side of me I have a poet," and she turned to Claud, "on the other poetry."

Gennaro bestowed on Calyste a gaze full of flattery.

By candle-light Beatrix looked even more beautiful than before. The pale gleam of the wax-lights cast a satin sheen

on her forehead, set sparks in her gazelle-like eyes, and fell through her silky ringlets, making separate hairs shine like threads of gold. With a graceful movement she threw off her gauze scarf, uncovering her shoulders. Calyste could then see the delicate nape, as white as milk, with a deep hollow that parted into two, curving off toward each shoulder with a lovely and delusive symmetry. The changes of aspect in which pretty women indulge produce very little effect in the fashionable world, where every eye is blasé, but they commit fearful ravages in a soul as fresh as was Calyste's. This bust, so unlike Camille's, revealed a perfectly different character in Beatrix. There could be seen pride of race, a tenacity peculiar to the aristocracy, and a certain hardness in that double muscle of the shoulder, which is perhaps the last surviving vestige of the conquerors' strength.

Calyste found it very difficult to seem to eat; he was full of nervous feelings, which took away his hunger. As in all young men, nature was in the clutches of those throes which precede first love, and stamp it so deeply on the soul. At his age the ardor of the heart repressed by the ardor of the moral sense leads to an internal conflict, which accounts for the long, respectful hesitancy, the deep absorption of love, the absence of all self-interest—all the peculiar attractions of youths whose heart and life are pure.

As he noted—by stealth, so as not to rouse Gennaro's jealous suspicions—all the details which make the Marquise de Rochefide so supremely beautiful, Calyste was oppressed by the majesty of the lady beloved; he felt himself shrink before the haughtiness of some of her glances, the imposing aspect of her face, overflowing with aristocratic self-consciousness, a pride which women can express by slight movements, by airs of the head and a magnificent slowness of gesture, which are all less affected and less studied than might be supposed. There is a sentiment behind all these modes of expression. The ambiguous position in which Beatrix found

herself compelled her to keep a watch over herself, to be imposing without being ridiculous; and women of the highest stamp can all achieve this, though it is the rock on which ordinary women are wrecked.

Beatrix could guess from Félicité's looks all the secret adoration she inspired in her neighbor, and that it was unworthy of her to encourage it; so from time to time she bestowed on him a repellent glance that fell on him like an avalanche of snow. The unfortunate youth appealed to Mademoiselle des Touches by a gaze in which she felt the tears kept down in his heart by superhuman determination, and Félicité kindly asked him why he ate nothing. Calyste stuffed to order, and made a feint of joining in the conversation. The idea of being tiresome instead of agreeable was unendurable, and hammered at his brain. He was all the more bashful because he saw, behind the Marquise's chair, the manservant he had met in the morning on the jetty, who would no doubt report his curiosity.

Whether he were contrite or happy, Madame de Rochefide paid no attention to him. Mademoiselle des Touches had led her to talk of her journey in Italy, and she gave a very witty account of the point-blank fire of passion with which a little Russian diplomat at Florence had honored her, laughing at these little young men who fling themselves at a woman as a locust rushes on grass. She made Claud Vignon and Gennaro laugh, and Félicité also; but these darts of sarcasm went straight to Calyste's heart, who only heard words through the humming in his ears and brain. The poor boy made no vow, as some obstinate men have done, to win this woman at any cost; no, he was not angry, he was miserable. When he discerned in Beatrix an intention to sacrifice him at Gennaro's feet, he only said to himself—"If only I can serve her in any way!" and allowed himself to be trampled on with the meekness of a lamb.

"How is it," said Claud Vignon to the Marquise, "that

you, who so much admire poetry, give it so bad a reception? Such artless admiration, so sweet in its expression, with no second thought, no reservation, is not that the poetry of the heart? Confess now that it gives you a sense of satisfaction and well-being."

"Certainly," she replied, "but we should be very unhappy and, above all, very worthless if we yielded to every passion we inspire."

"If you made no selection," said Conti, "we should not be so proud of being loved."

"When shall I be chosen and distinguished by a woman?" Calyste wondered to himself, restraining his agony of emotion with difficulty.

He reddened like a sufferer on whose wound a finger is laid. Mademoiselle des Touches was startled by the expression she saw in Calyste's face, and tried to comfort him with a sympathizing look. Claud Vignon caught that look. From that moment the writer's spirits rose and he vented his gayety in sarcasms: he maintained that love lived only in desire, that most women were mistaken in their love, that they often loved for reasons unknown to the men and to themselves, that they sometimes wished to deceive themselves, that the noblest of them were still insincere.

"Be content to criticise books, and do not criticise our feelings," said Camille, with an imperious flash.

The dinner ceased to be lively. Claud Vignon's satire had made both the women grave. Calyste was in acute torment in spite of the happiness of gazing at Beatrix. Conti tried to read Madame de Rochefide's eyes and guess her thoughts. When the meal was ended, Mademoiselle des Touches took Calyste's arm, left the other two men to the Marquise, and allowed them to lead the way, so as to say to the youth—

"My dear boy, if the Marquise falls in love with you, she will pitch Conti out of the window; but you are behaving in such a way as to tighten their bonds. Even if she were

enchanted by your worship, could she take any notice of it? Command yourself."

"She is so hard on me, she will never love me," said Calyste; "and if she does not love me, I shall die."

"Die? you! My dear Calyste, you are childish," said Camille. "You would not have died for me, then?"

"You made yourself my friend," replied he.

After the little chat that always accompanies the coffee, Vignon begged Conti to sing. Mademoiselle des Touches sat down to the piano. Camille and Gennaro sang *Dunque il mio bene tu mia sarai*, the final duet in Zingarelli's "Romeo and Juliet," one of the most pathetic pages of modern music. The passage *Di tanti palpiti* expresses love in all its passion. Calyste, sitting in the armchair where he had sat when Félicité had told him the story of the Marquise, listened devoutly. Beatrix and Vignon stood on each side of the piano.

Conti's exquisite voice blended perfectly with Félicité's. They both had frequently sung the piece; they knew all its resources, and agreed wonderfully in bringing them out. It was in their hands what the musician had intended to create, a poem of divine melancholy, the swan's song of two lovers. When the duet was ended the hearers were all in a state of feeling that cannot find expression in vulgar applause.

"Oh, Music is the queen of the arts!" exclaimed the Marquise.

"Camille gives the first place to youth and beauty—the queen of all poetry," said Claud Vignon.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked at Claud, dissembling a vague uneasiness. Beatrix, not seeing Calyste, looked round to see what effect the music had on him, less out of interest in him than for Conti's satisfaction. In a recess she saw a pale face covered with tears. At the sight she hastily turned away, as if some acute pain had stung her, and looked at Gennaro.

It was not merely that Music had risen up before Calyste, had touched him with her divine hand, had launched him on creation and stripped it of its mysteries to his eyes—he was overwhelmed by Conti's genius. In spite of what Camille Maupin had told him of the man's character, he believed at this moment that the singer must have a beautiful soul, a heart full of love. How was he to contend against such an artist? How could a woman ever cease to adore him? The song must pierce her soul like another soul.

The poor boy was as much overcome by poetic feeling as by despair: he saw himself as so small a thing! This ingenuous conviction of his own nothingness was to be read in his face, mingling with his admiration. He did not observe Beatrix, who, attracted to Calyste by the contagion of genuine feeling, pointed him out by a glance to Mademoiselle des Touches.

"Oh! such a delightful nature!" said Félicité. "Conti, you will never receive any applause to compare with the homage paid you by this boy. Let us sing a trio. Come, Beatrix, my dear."

When the Marquise, Camille, and Conti had returned to the piano, Calyste rose unperceived, flung himself on a sofa in the adjoining bedroom, of which the door was open, and remained there sunk in despair.

PART II.

THE DRAMA.

"What is the matter with you, my boy?" said Claud Vignon, stealing quietly in after him and taking his hand. "You are in love, you believe yourself scorned; but it is not so. In a few days the field will be open to you, you will be supreme here, and be loved by more than one woman; in fact, if you know how to manage matters, you will be a sultan here."

"What are you saying?" cried Calyste, starting to his feet and dragging Claud away into the library. "Who that is here loves me?"

"Camille," said Vignon.

"Camille loves me?" said Calyste. "And what of you?"

"I," said Claud, "I——"

He paused. Then he sat down and rested his head against a pillow, in the deepest melancholy.

"I am weary of life," he went on, after a short silence, "and I have not the courage to end it. I wish I were mistaken in what I have told you; but within the last few days more than one vivid gleam has flashed upon me. I did not wander about the rocks of le Croisic for my amusement, on my soul! The bitterness of my tone when, on my return, I found you talking to Camille, had its source in the depths of my wounded self-respect. I will have an explanation presently with Camille. Two minds so clear-sighted as hers and mine cannot deceive each other. Between two professional duelists a fight is soon ended. So I may at once announce my departure. Yes, I shall leave les Touches, to-morrow perhaps, with Conti.

"When we are no longer here, some strange—perhaps ter-

rible—things will certainly happen, and I shall be sorry not to look on at these struggles of passion, so rare in France, and so dramatic! You are very young to enter on so perilous a fight; I am interested in you. But for the deep disgust I feel for women, I would stay to help you to play the game; it is difficult; you may lose it; you have two remarkable women to deal with, and you are already too much in love with one to make use of the other.

"Beatrix must surely have some tenacity in her nature, and Camille has magnanimity. You, perhaps, like some fragile and brittle thing, will be dashed between the two rocks, swept away by the torrent of passion. Take care."

Calyste's amazement on hearing these words allowed Claud Vignon to finish his speech and leave the lad, who remained in the position of a traveler in the Alps to whom his guide has proved the depth of an abyss by dropping in a stone.

He had heard from Claud himself that Camille loved him, Calyste, at the moment when he knew that his love for Beatrix would end only with his life. There was something in the situation too much for such a guileless young soul. Crushed by immense regret that weighed upon him for the past, killed by the perplexities of the present, between Beatrix, whom he loved, and Camille, whom he no longer loved, when Claud said that she loved him, the poor youth was desperate; he sat undecided, lost in thought. He vainly sought to guess the reasons for which Félicité had rejected his devotion, to go to Paris and accept that of Claud Vignon.

Now and again Madame de Rochefide's voice came to his ear, pure and clear, reviving the violent excitement from which he had fled in leaving the drawing-room. Several times he could hardly master himself so far as to restrain a fierce desire to seize her and snatch her away. What would become of him? Could he ever come again to les Touches? Knowing that Camille loved him, how could he here worship Beatrix? He could find no issue from his difficulties.

Gradually silence fell on the house. Without heeding it, he heard the shutting of doors. Then suddenly he counted the twelve strokes of midnight told by the clock in the next room, where the voices of Camille and Claud now roused him from the numbing contemplation of the future. A light shone there amid the darkness. Before he could show himself to them, he heard these dreadful words spoken by Claud Vignon.

"You came back from Paris madly in love with Calyste," he was saying to Félicité. "But you were appalled at the consequences of such a passion at your age; it would lead you into a gulf, a hell—to suicide perhaps. Love can exist only in the belief that it is eternal, and you could foresee, a few paces before you in life, a terrible parting—weariness and old age putting a dreadful end to a beautiful poem. You remember Adolphe, the disastrous termination of the loves of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant, who were, nevertheless, much better matched in age than you and Calyste.

"So, then, you took me, as men take fascines, to raise an intrenchment between yourself and the enemy. But while you tried to attach me to les Touches, was it not that you might spend your days in secret worship of your divinity? But to carry out such a scheme, at once unworthy and sublime, you should have chosen a common man or a man so absorbed by lofty thought that he would be easily deceived. You fancied that I was simple and as easy to cheat as a man of genius. I am, it would seem, no more than a clever man. I saw through you. When yesterday I sang the praises of women of your age and explained to you why Calyste loved you, do you suppose that I thought all your ecstatic looks—brilliant, enchanting—were meant for me? Had I not already read your soul? The eyes, indeed, were fixed on mine, but the heart throbbed for Calyste. You have never been loved, my poor Maupin; and you never will be now, after denying yourself the beautiful fruit which chance put in your

way at the very gates of woman's hell, which must close at the touch of the figure 50."

"And why has love always avoided me?" she asked, in a broken voice. "You who know everything, tell me."

"Why, you are unamiable," said he; "you will not yield to love, you want it to yield to you. You can perhaps be led into the mischief and spirit of a school-boy; but you have no youth of heart; your mind is too deep, you never were artless, and you cannot begin now. Your charm lies in mystery; it is abstract, and not practical. And, again, your power repels very powerful natures; they dread a conflict. Your strength may attract young souls, which, like Calyste's, love to feel protected; but, in the long run, it is fatiguing. You are superior, sublime! You must accept the disadvantages of these two qualities; they are wearisome."

"What a verdict!" cried Camille. "Can I never be a woman? Am I a monster?"

"Possibly," said Claud.

"We shall see," cried the woman, stung to the quick.

"Good-night, my dear. I leave to-morrow. I owe you no grudge, Camille; I think you the greatest of women; but if I should consent to play the part any longer of a screen or a curtain," said Claud, with two marked inflexions of his voice, "you would despise me utterly. We can part now without grief or remorse; we have no happiness to mourn for, no hopes to disappoint.

"To you, as to some infinitely rare men of genius, love is not what nature made it—a vehement necessity, with acute but transient delights attached to its satisfaction, and then death; you regard it as what Christianity has made it: an ideal realm full of noble sentiments, of immense small things, of poetry and spiritual sensations, of sacrifices, flowers of morality, enchanting harmonies, placed far above all vulgar grossness, but whither two beings joined to be one angel are carried up on the wings of pleasure. This was what I hoped

for; I thought I held one of the keys which open the door that is shut to so many persons, and through which we soar into infinitude. You were there already! And so I was deceived.

"I am going back to misery in my vast prison, Paris. Such a deception at the beginning of my career would have been enough to make me flee from woman; now, it fills my soul with such disenchantment as casts me for ever into appalling solitude; I shall be destitute even of the faith which helped the holy fathers to people it with sacred visions. This, my dear Camille, is what a superior nature brings us to. We may each of us sing the terrible chant that a poet has put into the mouth of Moses addressing the Almighty—

"'O Lord! Thou hast made me powerful and alone!'"

At this moment Calyste came in.

"I ought to let you know that I am here," said he.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked absolutely terrified; a sudden color flushed her calm features with a fiery red. All through the scene she was handsomer than she had ever been in her life.

"We thought you had gone, Calyste," said Claud; "but this involuntary indiscretion on both sides will have done no harm; perhaps you will feel more free at les Touches now that you know Félicité so completely. Her silence shows me that I was not mistaken as to the part she intended that I should play. She loves you, as I told you; but she loves you for yourself and not for herself—a feeling which few women are fitted to conceive of or to cling to: very few of them know the delights of pain kept alive by desire. It is one of the grander passions reserved for men; but she is somewhat of a man," he added, with a smile. "Your passion for Beatrix will torture her and make her happy, both at once."

Tears rose to Mademoiselle des Touches' eyes; she dared not look either at the merciless Claud or the ingenuous

Calyste. She was frightened at having been understood; she had not supposed that any man, whatever his gifts, could divine such a torment of refined feeling, such lofty heroism as hers. And Calyste, seeing her so humiliated at finding her magnanimity betrayed, sympathized with the agitation of the woman he had placed so high, and whom he beheld so stricken. By an irresistible impulse, he fell at Camille's feet and kissed her hands, hiding his tear-washed face in them.

"Claud!" she cried, "do not desert me; what will become of me?"

"What have you to fear?" replied the critic. "Calyste already loves the Marquise like a madman. You can certainly have no stronger barrier between him and yourself than this passion fanned into life by your own act. It is quite as effectual as I could be. Yesterday there was danger for you and for him; but to-day everything will give you maternal joys," and he gave her a mocking glance. "You will be proud of his triumphs."

Félicité looked at Calyste, who, at these words, raised his head with a hasty movement. Claud Vignon was sufficiently revenged by the pleasure he took in seeing their confusion.

"You pushed him toward Madame de Rochefide," Vignon went on; "he is now under the spell. You have dug your own grave. If you had but trusted yourself to me, you would have avoided the disasters that await you."

"Disasters!" cried Camille Maupin, raising Calyste's head to the level of her own, kissing his hair and wetting it with her tears. "No, Calyste. Forget all you have just heard, and count me for nothing!"

She stood up in front of the two men, drawn to her full height, quelling them by the lightnings that flashed from her eyes in which all her soul shone.

"While Claud was speaking," she went on, "I saw all

the beauty, the dignity of hopeless love; is it not the only sentiment that brings us near to God? Do not love me, Calyste; but I—I will love you as no other woman can ever love!"

It was the wildest cry that ever a wounded eagle sent out from his eyrie. Claud, on one knee, took her hand and kissed it.

"Now go, my dear boy," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste; "your mother may be uneasy."

Calyste returned to Guérande at a leisurely pace, turning around to see the light which shone from the windows of Beatrix's rooms. He was himself surprised that he felt so little pity for Camille; he was almost annoyed with her for having deprived him of fifteen months of happiness. And again, now and then, he felt the same thrill in himself that Camille had just caused him, he felt the tears she had shed on his hair, he suffered in her suffering, he fancied he could hear the moans—for, no doubt, she was moaning—of this wonderful woman for whom he had so longed a few days since.

As he opened the courtyard gate at home, where all was silent, he saw through the window his mother working by the primitive lamp while waiting for him. Tears rose to his eyes at the sight.

"What more has happened?" asked Fanny, her face expressive of terrible anxiety. Calyste's only reply was to clasp his mother in his arms and kiss her cheeks, her forehead, her hair, with the passionate effusion which delights a mother, infusing into her the subtle fires of the life she gave.

"It is you that I love!" said Calyste to his mother, blushing and almost shamefaced; "you who live for me alone, whom I would fain make happy."

"But you are not in your usual frame of mind, my child,"

said the Baroness, looking at her son. "What has happened?"

"Camille loves me," said he; "and I no longer love her."

The Baroness drew him toward her and kissed him on the forehead, and in the deep silence of the gloomy old tapestried room he could hear the rapid beating of his mother's heart. The Irishwoman was jealous of Camille, and had suspected the truth. While awaiting her son night after night she had studied that woman's passion; led by the light of persistent meditation, she had entered into Camille's heart; and without being able to account for it, she had understood that in that unwedded soul there was a sort of motherly affection. Calyste's story horrified this simple and guileless mother.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "love Madame de Rochefide; she will cause me no sorrow."

Beatrix was not free; she could not upset any of the plans they had made for Calyste's happiness, at least so Fanny thought; she saw in her a sort of daughter-in-law to love, and not a rival mother to contend with.

"But Beatrix will never love me!" cried Calyste.

"Perhaps," replied the Baroness, with a knowing air. "Did you not say that she is to be alone to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Well, my child," said the mother, coloring, "jealousy lurks in all our hearts, but I did not know that I should ever find it at the bottom of my own, for I did not think that any one would try to rob me of my Calyste's affection!" She sighed. "I fancied," she went on, "that marriage would be to you what it was to me. What lights you have thrown on my mind during these two months! What colors are reflected on your very natural passion, my poor darling! Well, still seem to love your Mademoiselle des Touches; the Marquise will be jealous of her and will be yours."

"Oh, my sweet mother, Camille would never have told me that!" cried Calyste, taking his mother by the waist and kissing her on the neck.

"You make me very wicked, you bad child," said she, quite happy at seeing the beaming face hope gave to her son, who gaily went up the winding stairs.

Next morning Calyste desired Gasselin to stand on the road from Guérande to Saint-Nazaire and watch for Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage; then, as it went past, he was to count the persons in it.

Gasselin returned just as the family had sat down together at breakfast.

"What now can have happened?" said Mademoiselle du Guénic; "Gasselin is running as if Guérande were burning."

"He must have caught the rat," said Mariotte, who was bringing in the coffee, milk, and toast.

"He is coming from the town and not from the garden," replied the blind woman.

"But the rat's hole is behind the wall to the front by the street," said Mariotte.

"Monsieur le Chevalier, there were five of them; four inside and the coachman."

"Two ladies on the back seat?" asked Calyste.

"And two gentlemen in front," replied Gasselin.

"Saddle my father's horse, ride after them; be at Saint-Nazaire by the time the boat starts for Paimbœuf; and if the two men go on board, come back and tell me as fast as you can gallop."

Gasselin went.

"Why, nephew, you have the very devil in you!" exclaimed old Aunt Zéphirine.

"Let him please himself, sister," cried the Baron. "He was as gloomy as an owl, and now he is as merry as a lark."

"Perhaps you told him that our dear Charlotte was coming," said the old lady, turning to her sister-in-law.

"No," replied the Baroness.

"I thought he might wish to go to meet her," said Mademoiselle du Guénic slily.

"If Charlotte is to stay three months with her aunt he has time enough to see her in," replied the Baroness.

"Why, sister, what has occurred since yesterday," asked the old lady. "You were so delighted to think that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was going this morning to fetch her niece."

"Jacqueline wants me to marry Charlotte to snatch me from perdition, aunt," said Calyste, laughing, and giving his mother a look of intelligence. "I was on the mall this morning when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was talking to Monsieur du Halga; she did not reflect that it would be far worse perdition for me to be married at my age."

"It is written above," cried the old aunt, interrupting Calyste, "that I am to die neither happy nor at peace. I should have liked to see our family continued, and some of our lands redeemed—but nothing of the kind! Can you, my fine nephew, put anything in the scale to outweigh such duties as these?"

"Why," said the Baron, "can Mademoiselle des Touches hinder Calyste from marrying in due course? I must go to see her."

"I can assure you, father, that Félicité will never be an obstacle in the way of my marriage."

"I cannot make head or tail of it!" said the blind woman, who knew nothing of her nephew's sudden passion for the Marquise de Rochefide.

The mother kept her son's secret; in such matters silence is instinctive in all women. The old aunt sank into deep meditation, listening with all her might, spying every voice, every sound, to guess the mystery they were evidently keeping from her.

Gasselin soon returned, and told his young master that he



"SPARE THE HORSES, MY BOY—THEY HAVE TWELVE LEAGUES BEFORE THEM."

had not needed to go so far as Saint-Nazaire to learn that Mademoiselle des Touches and the lady would return alone; he had heard it in town, from Bernus the carrier, who had taken charge of the gentlemen's baggage.

"They will come back alone?" said Calyste. "Bring out my horse."

Gasselin supposed from his young master's voice that there was something serious on hand; he saddled both the horses, loaded the pistols without saying anything, and dressed to ride out with Calyste. Calyste was so delighted to know that Claud and Gennaro were gone that he never thought of the party he would meet at Saint-Nazaire; he thought only of the pleasure of escorting the Marquise. He took his old father's hands and pressed them affectionately, he kissed his mother, and put his arm round his old aunt's waist.

"Well, at any rate I like him better thus than when he is sad," said old Zéphirine.

"Where are you off to, chevalier?" asked his father.

"To Saint-Nazaire."

"The deuce you are! And when is the wedding to be?" said the Baron, who thought he was in a hurry to see Charlotte de Kergarouët. "I should like to be a grandfather; it is high time."

When Gasselin showed his evident intention of riding out with Calyste, it occurred to the young man that he might return in Camille's carriage with Beatrix, leaving his horse in Gasselin's care, and he clapped the man on the shoulder, saying—

"That was well thought of."

"So I should think," replied Gasselin.

"Spare the horses, my boy," said his father, coming out on the steps with Fanny; "they have twelve leagues before them."

Calyste exchanged looks full of meaning with his mother and was gone.

"Dearest treasure!" said she, seeing him bend his head under the top of the gate.

"God preserve him!" replied the Baron, "for we shall never make another."

This little speech, in the rather coarse taste of a country gentleman, made the Baroness shiver.

"My nephew is not so much in love with Charlotte as to rush to meet her," said old mademoiselle to Mariotte, who was clearing the table.

"Oh, a fine lady has come to les Touches, a Marquise, and he is running after her. Well, well, he is young!" said Mariotte.

"Those women will be the death of him," said Mademoiselle du Guénic.

"That won't kill him, mademoiselle, quite the contrary," replied Mariotte, who seemed quite happy in Calyste's happiness.

Calyste was riding at a pace that might have killed his horse, when Gasselin very happily asked his master whether he wished to arrive before the departure of the boat; this was by no means his purpose; he had no wish to be seen by either Conti or Vignon. The young man reined in his horse and looked complacently at the double furrow traced by the wheels of the carriage on the sandy parts of the road. He was wildly gay merely at the thought: "She passed this way; she will come back this way; her eyes rested on those woods, on these trees!"

"What a pretty road!" said he to Gasselin, looking around admiringly.

"Yes, sir, Brittany is the finest country in the world," replied the servant. "Are there such flowers in the hedges or green lanes that wind like this one anywhere else to be found?"

"Nowhere, Gasselin."

"Here comes Bernus' carriage," said Gasselin.

"Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will be in it with her niece; let us hide," said Calyste.

"Hide here, sir! are you crazy? We are in the midst of the sands."

The carriage, which was in fact crawling up a sandy hill above Saint-Nazaire, presently appeared, in all the artless simplicity of rude Breton construction. To Calyste's great astonishment, the conveyance was full.

"We have left Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and her sister and her niece in a great pother," said the driver to Gasselin; "all the places had been taken by the custom-house."

"I am done for!" cried Calyste.

The vehicle was in fact full of custom-house men, on their way, no doubt, to relieve those in charge at the salt-marshes.

When Calyste reached the little esplanade surrounding the church of Saint-Nazaire, whence there is a view of Paimbœuf and of the majestic estuary of the Loire where it struggles with the tide, he found Camille and the Marquise waving their handkerchiefs to bid a last farewell to the two passengers borne away by the steam packet. Beatrix was quite bewitching, her face tenderly shaded by the reflection from a rice-straw hat on which poppies were lightly piled, tied by a scarlet ribbon; in a flowered India-muslin dress, one little slender foot put forward in a green-gaitered shoe, leaning on her slight parasol-stick, and waving her well-gloved hand. Nothing is more strikingly effective than a woman on a rock, like a statue on its pedestal.

Conti could see Calyste go up to Camille.

"I thought," said the youth to Mademoiselle des Touches, "that you two ladies would be returning alone."

"That was very nice of you, Calyste," she replied, taking his hand. Beatrix looked around, glanced at her young adorer, and gave him the most imperious flash at her command. A smile that the Marquise caught on Camille's eloquent lips made her feel the vulgarity of this impulse worthy of a

mere *bourgeoise.* Madame de Rochefide then said with a smile to Calyste—

"And was it not rather impertinent to suppose that I could bore Camille on the way?"

"My dear, one man for two widows is not much in the way," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Calyste's arm, and leaving Beatrix to gaze after the boat.

At this instant Calyste heard in the street of what must be called the port of Saint-Nazaire the voices of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, Charlotte, and Gasselin, all three chattering like magpies. The old maid was catechising Gasselin, and wanted to know what had brought him and his master to Saint-Nazaire; Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage had made a commotion.

Before the lad could escape, Charlotte had caught sight of him.

"There is Calyste!" cried the girl, pointing him out to her companions.

"Go and offer them my carriage; their woman can sit by my coachman," said Camille, who knew that Madame de Kergarouët with her daughter and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had failed to get places.

Calyste, who could not avoid obeying Camille, went to deliver this message. As soon as she knew that she would have to ride with the Marquise de Rochefide and the famous Camille Maupin, Madame de Kergarouët ignored her elder sister's objections; Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël refused to avail herself of what she called the devil's chariot. At Nantes people lived in rather more civilized latitudes than at Guérande; Camille was admired; she was regarded as the Muse of Brittany and an honor to the country; she excited as much curiosity as jealousy. The absolution granted her in Paris by the fashionable world was consecrated by Mademoiselle des Touches' fine fortune, and perhaps by her former successes at

Nantes, which was proud of having been the birthplace of Camille Maupin.

So the Viscountess, crazy with curiosity, dragged away her old sister, turning a deaf ear to her jeremiads.

"Good-morning, Calyste," said little Charlotte.

"Good-morning, Charlotte," replied Calyste, but he did not offer her his arm.

Both speechless with surprise, she at his coldness, he at his own cruelty, they went up the hollow ravine that is called a street at Saint-Nazaire, following the two sisters in silence. In an instant the girl of sixteen saw the castle in the air which her romantic hopes had built and furnished crumble into ruins. She and Calyste had so constantly played together during their childhood, they had been so intimately connected, that she imagined her future life secure. She had hurried on, carried away by heedless happiness, like a bird rushing down on a field of wheat; she was checked in her flight without being able to imagine what the obstacle could be.

"What is the matter, Calyste?" she asked, taking his hand.

"Nothing," he replied, withdrawing his hand with terrible haste as he thought of his aunt's schemes and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's.

Tears filled Charlotte's eyes. She looked at the handsome youth without animosity; but she was to feel the first pangs of jealousy and know the dreadful rage of rivalry at the sight of the two Parisian beauties, which led her to suspect the cause of Calyste's coldness.

Charlotte de Kergarouët was of middle height; she had rustic rosy cheeks, a round face with wide-awake black eyes that affected intelligence, a quantity of brown hair, a round waist, flat back, and thin arms, and the crisp, decided tone of speech adopted by country-bred girls who do not wish to seem simpletons. She was the spoiled child of the family in consequence of her aunt's preference for her. At this moment

she was wearing the plaid tweed cloak lined with green silk that she had put on for the passage in the steamboat. Her traveling gown of cheap stuff, with a chaste, gathered body and a finely pleated collar, would presently strike her as being hideous in comparison with the fresh morning dress worn by Beatrix and Camille. She would be painfully conscious of stockings soiled on the rocks and the boats she had jumped into, of old leather shoes, chosen especially that there might be nothing good to spoil on the journey, as is the manner and custom of provincial folk.

As to the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, she was typically provincial. Tall, lean, faded, full of covert pretentiousness which only showed when it was wounded, a great talker, and by dint of talk picking up a few ideas as a billiard-player makes a cannon, which gave her a reputation for brilliancy; trying to snub Parisians by a display of blunt country shrewdness, and an assumption of perfect contentment constantly paraded; stooping in the hope of being picked up, and furious at being left on her knees; fishing for compliments, as the English have it, and not always catching them; dressing in a style at once exaggerated and slatternly; fancying that a lack of politeness was lofty impertinence, and that she could distress people greatly by paying them no attention; refusing things she wished for to have them offered a second time and pressed on her beyond reason; her head full of extinct subjects, and much astonished to find herself behind the times; finally, hardly able to abstain for one hour from dragging in Nantes, and the small lions of Nantes, and the gossip of the upper ten of Nantes; complaining of Nantes, and criticising Nantes, and then regarding as a personal affront the concurrence extorted from the politeness of those who rashly agreed with all she said.

Her manners, her speech, and her ideas had to some extent rubbed off on her four daughters.

To meet Camille Maupin and Madame de Rochefide!

Here was fame for the future and matter for a hundred conversations! She marched on the church as if to take it by storm, flourishing her handkerchief, which she unfolded to show the corners ponderously embroidered at home, and trimmed with worn-out lace. She had a rather stalwart gait, which did not matter in a woman of seven-and-forty.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said she, and she pointed to Calyste, who was following sulkily enough with Charlotte, "has informed us of your amiable offer; but my sister, my daughter, and I fear we shall incommode you."

"Not I, sister; I shall not inconvenience these ladies," said the old maid sharply. "I can surely find a horse in Saint-Nazaire to carry me home."

Camille and Beatrix exchanged sidelong looks, which Calyste noted, and that glance was enough to annihilate every memory of his youth, all his belief in the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, and to wreck for ever the schemes laid by the two families.

"Five can sit quite easily in the carriage," replied Mademoiselle des Touches, on whom Jacqueline had turned her back. "Even if we were horribly squeezed, which is impossible, as you are all so slight, I should be amply compensated by the pleasure of doing a service to friends of Calyste's. Your maid, madame, will find a seat; and your bundles, if you have any, can be put in the rumble; I have no servant with me."

The Viscountess was profusely grateful, and blamed her sister Jacqueline, who had been in such a hurry for her niece that she would not give her time to travel by land in their carriage; to be sure, the post-road was not only longer, but expensive; she must return immediately to Nantes, where she had left three more little kittens eager to have her back again —and she stroked her daughter's chin. But Charlotte put on a little victimized air as she looked up at her mother, which made it seem likely that the Viscountess bored her four

daughters most consumedly by trotting them out as persistently as, in "Tristram Shandy," Corporal Trim puts his cap on.

"You are a happy mother, and you must——" Camille began; but she broke off, remembering that Beatrix must have deserted her boy to follow Conti.

"Oh!" said the Viscountess, "though it is my misfortune to spend my life in the country and at Nantes, I have the comfort of knowing that my children adore me. Have you any children?" she asked Camille.

"I am Mademoiselle des Touches," replied Camille. "Madame is the Marquise de Rochefide."

"Then you are to be pitied for not knowing the greatest happiness we poor mere women can have. Is it not so, madame?" said she to the Marquise, to remedy her blunder. "But you have many compensations."

A hot tear welled up in Beatrix's eyes; she turned hastily away and went to the clumsy parapet at the edge of the rock, whither Calyste followed her.

"Madame," said Camille in a low voice to Madame de Kergarouët, "do you not know that the Marquise is separated from her husband, that she has not seen her son for two years, and does not know when they may meet again?"

"Dear!" cried Madame de Kergarouët! "Poor lady! Is it a judicial separation?"

"No, incompatibility," said Camille.

"I can quite understand that," replied the Viscountess undaunted.

Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had intrenched herself a few yards off with her dear Charlotte. Calyste, after assuring himself that no one could see them, took the Marquise's hand and kissed it, leaving a tear on it. Beatrix turned on him, her eyes dried by anger; some cruel word was on her tongue, but she could say nothing as she saw the tears on the beautiful face of the angelic youth, as deeply moved as she was.

"Good heavens, Calyste!" said Camille in a whisper as he rejoined them with Madame de Rochefide, "you will have *that* for a mother-in-law, and that little gaby for your wife."

"Because her aunt is rich," added Calyste sarcastically.

The whole party now moved toward the inn, and the Viscountess thought it incumbent on her part to make some satirical remarks to Camille Maupin on the savages of Saint-Nazaire.

"I love Brittany, madame," replied Félicité gravely. "I was born at Guérande."

Calyste could not help admiring Mademoiselle des Touches, who, by the tones of her voice, her steady gaze, and placid manners, put him at his ease, notwithstanding the terrible confessions of the scene that had taken place last night. Still, she looked tired; her features betrayed that she had not slept; they looked thickened, but the forehead suppressed the internal storm with relentless calm.

"What queens!" said he to Charlotte, pointing to Beatrix and Camille, as he gave the girl his arm, to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's great satisfaction.

"What notion was this of your mother's," said the old lady, also giving a lean arm to her niece, "to throw us into the company of this wretched woman?"

"Oh, aunt! a woman who is the glory of Brittany."

"The disgrace, child! Do not let me see you too cringing to her."

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is right," said Calyste; "you are unjust."

"Oh, she has bewitched you!" retorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"I have the same friendship for her that I have for you," said Calyste.

"How long have the du Guénics taken to lying?" said the old woman.

"Since the Pen-Hoëls took to being deaf," retorted Calyste.

"Then you are not in love with her?" asked the aunt, delighted.

"I was, but I am no longer," he replied.

"Bad boy! Then why have you given us so much anxiety? I knew that love was but a folly; only marriage is to be relied on," said she, looking at Charlotte.

Charlotte, somewhat reassured, hoped to reconquer her advantages by an appeal to the memories of their childhood, and clung to Calyste's arm; but he vowed to himself that he would come to a clear and candid understanding with the little heiress.

"Oh, what famous games of *mouche* we will have, Calyste," said she, "and what capital fun!"

The horses were put in; Camille made the Viscountess and Charlotte take the best seats, for Jacqueline had disappeared; then she and the Marquise sat with their back to the horses. Calyste, forced to give up the pleasure he had promised himself, rode at the side of the carriage; and the horses, all tired, went slowly enough to allow of his gazing at Beatrix.

History has kept no record of the singular conversation of these four persons, so strangely thrown together by chance in this carriage; for it is impossible to accept the hundred and something versions which were current at Nantes as to the stories, the repartees, and the witticisms which Madame de Kergarouët heard from Camille Maupin *himself*. She took good care not to repeat, nor even understand, the replies made by Mademoiselle des Touches to all her ridiculous inquiries—such as writers so often hear, and by which they are made to pay dearly for their few joys.

"How do you write your books?" asked Madame de Kergarouët.

"Why, just as you do your needlework," said Camille, "your netting, or cross-stitch."

"And where did you find all those deep observations and attractive pictures?"

"Where you find all the clever things you say, madame. Nothing is easier than writing, and if you chose——"

"Ah, it all lies in the choosing? I should never have thought it! And which of your works do you yourself prefer?"

"It is difficult to have any preference for these little kittens."

"You are surfeited with compliments; it is impossible to say anything new."

"Believe me, madame, I appreciate the form you give to yours."

The Viscountess, anxious not to seem neglectful of the Marquise, said, looking archly at her—

"I shall never forget this drive, sitting between wit and beauty."

The Marquise laughed.

"You flatter me, madame," said she. "It is not in nature that wit should be noticed in the company of genius, and I have not yet said much."

Charlotte, keenly alive to her mother's absurdity, looked at her, hoping to check her; but the Viscountess still valiantly showed fight against the two laughing Parisian ladies. Calyste, trotting at an easy pace by the carriage, could only see the two women on the back seat, and his eyes fell on them alternately, betraying a very melancholy mood. Beatrix, who could not help being seen, persistently avoided looking at the youth; with a placidity that is maddening to a lover, she sat with her hands folded over her crossed shawl, and seemed lost in deep meditation.

At a spot where the road is shaded and as moist and green as a cool forest path, where the wheels of the carriage were scarcely audible, and the wind brought a resinous scent, Camille remarked on the beauty of the place, and, leaning her hand on Beatrix's knee, she pointed to Calyste and said—

"How well he rides!"

"Calyste?" said Madame de Kergarouët. "He is a capital horseman."

"Oh, Calyste is so nice!" said Charlotte.

"There are so many Englishmen just like him——" replied the Marquise indifferently, without finishing her sentence.

"His mother is Irish—an O'Brien," said Charlotte, feeling personally attacked.

Camille and the Marquise drove into Guérande with the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët and her daughter, to the great astonishment of the gaping townspeople; they left their traveling companions at the corner of the little Rue du Guénic, where there was something very like a crowd. Calyste had ridden on to announce to his mother the arrival of the party, who were expected to dinner. The meal had been politely put off till four o'clock.

The chevalier went back to give the ladies his arm; he kissed Camille's hand, hoping to touch that of the Marquise, but she firmly kept her arms folded, and he besought her in vain with eyes sparkling through wasted tears.

"You little goose!" said Camille in his ear, with a light, friendly kiss on it.

"True enough!" said Calyste to himself as the carriage turned. "I forget my mother's counsels—but I believe I always shall forget them."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who arrived valiantly mounted on a hired nag, Madame de Kergarouët, and Charlotte found the table laid, and were cordially, if not luxuriously, received by the du Guénics. Old Zéphirine had sent for certain bottles of fine wine from the depths of the cellar, and Mariotte had surpassed herself in Breton dishes. The Viscountess, delighted to have traveled with the famous Camille Maupin, tried to expatiate on modern literature and the place held in it by Camille; but as it had been with the game of whist, so it was with literary matters; neither the du Guénics, nor the curé,

who looked in, nor the Chevalier du Halga understood anything about them. The abbé and the old naval officer sipped the liqueurs at dessert.

As soon as Mariotte, helped by Gasselin and by Madame de Kergarouët's maid, had cleared the table, there was an enthusiastic clamor for *mouche*. Joy prevailed. Everybody believed Calyste to be free, and saw him married ere long to little Charlotte. Calyste sat silent. For the first time in his life he was making comparisons between the Kergarouëts and the two elegant and clever women, full of taste, who, at this very moment, were probably laughing at the two provincials, if he might judge from the first glances they had exchanged. Fanny, knowing Calyste's secret, noticed his dejection. Charlotte's coquetting and her mother's attacks had no effect on him. Her dear boy was evidently bored; his body was in this room, where of yore he could have been amused by the absurdities of *mouche*, but his spirit was wandering round les Touches.

"How can I send him off to Camille's?" thought the mother, who loved him, and who was bored because he was bored. Her affection lent her inventiveness.

"You are dying to be off to les Touches to see *her?*" she whispered to Calyste.

The boy's answer was a smile and a blush that thrilled this devoted mother to her heart's very core.

"Madame," said she to the Viscountess, "you will be very uncomfortable to-morrow in the carrier's chaise, and obliged to start very early in the morning. Would it not be better if you were to have Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage? Go over, Calyste," said she, turning to her son, "and arrange the matter at les Touches; but come back quickly."

"It will not take ten minutes," cried Calyste, giving his mother a wild hug out on the steps, whither she followed him.

Calyste flew with the speed of a fawn, and was in the entrance hall of les Touches just as Camille and Beatrix came

out of the dining-room after dinner. He had the wit to offer his arm to Félicité.

"You have deserted the Viscountess and her daughter for us," said she, pressing his arm. "We are able to appreciate the extent of the sacrifice."

"Are these Kergarouëts related to the Portenduères and old Admiral de Kergarouët, whose widow married Charles de Vandenesse?" Madame de Rochefide asked Camille.

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is the admiral's grand-niece," replied Camille.

"She is a charming young person," said Beatrix, seating herself in a Gothic armchair; "the very thing for Monsieur du Guénic."

"That marriage shall never be!" cried Camille vehemently.

Calyste, overwhelmed by the cold indifference of the Marquise, who spoke of the little country girl as the only creature for whom he, the country chevalier, was a match, sat speechless and bewildered.

"And why not, Camille?" said Madame de Rochefide.

"My dear," said Camille, seeing Calyste's despair, "I did not advise Conti to get married, and I believe I was delightful to him—you are ungenerous."

Beatrix looked at her with surprise mingled with indefinable suspicions. Calyste almost understood Camille's self-immolation as he saw the pale flush rise in her cheeks, which, in her, betrayed the most violent emotions; he went up to her awkwardly enough, took her hand, and kissed it. Camille sat down to the piano with an easy air, as if equally sure of her friend and of the lover she had claimed, turning her back upon them, and leaving them to each other. She improvised some variations on airs, unconsciously suggested by her thoughts, for they were all deeply sad. The Marquise appeared to be listening; but she was watching Calyste, who was too young and too guileless to play the part

suggested to him by Camille, and sat lost in ecstasy before his real idol. At the end of an hour, during which Mademoiselle des Touches gave herself up to her jealous feelings, Beatrix went to her room.

Camille at once led Calyste into her own room, so as not to be overheard, for women have an admirable sense of distrust.

"My child," said she, "you must pretend to love me or you are lost; you are a perfect child; you know nothing about women, you know only how to love. To love and to be loved are two very different things. You are rushing into terrible suffering. I want you to be happy. If you provoke Beatrix, not in her pride, but in her obstinacy, she is capable of flying off to join Conti at a few leagues from Paris. Then what would become of you?"

"I should love her," replied Calyste.

"You would not see her again."

"Oh, yes, I should," said he.

"Pray, how?"

"I should follow her."

"But you are as poor as Job, my dear child."

"My father, Gasselin, and I lived in la Vendée for three months on a hundred and fifty francs, marching day and night."

"Calyste," said Félicité, "listen to me. I see you are too honest to act a part; I do not wish to corrupt so pure a nature as yours. I will take it all on myself. Beatrix shall love you."

"Is it possible?" he cried, clasping his hands.

"Yes," said Camille. "But we must undo the vows she had made to herself. I will lie for you. Only do not interfere in any way with the arduous task I am about to undertake. The Marquise has much aristocratic cunning; she is intellectually suspicious; no hunter ever had to take more difficult game; so in this case, my poor boy, the sportsman must take

his dog's advice. Will you promise to obey me blindly? I will be your Fox," said she, naming Calyste's best hound.

"What then am I to do?" replied the young man.

"Very little," said Camille. "Come here every day at noon. I, like an impatient mistress, shall always be at the window of the corridor that looks out on the Guérande road to see you coming. I shall fly to my room so as not to be seen—not to let you know the depth of a passion that is a burden on you; but sometimes you will see me and wave your handkerchief to me. Then in the courtyard, and as you come upstairs, you must put on a look of some annoyance. That will be no dissimulation, my child," said she, leaning her head on his breast, "will it? Do not hurry up; look out of the staircase window on to the garden to look for Beatrix. When she is there—and she will be there, never fear—if she sees you, come straight, but very slowly, to the little drawing-room, and thence to my room. If you should see me at the window spying your treachery, you must start back that I may not catch you imploring a glance from Beatrix. Once in my room you will be my prisoner. Yes; we will sit there till four o'clock. You may spend the time in reading; I will smoke. You will be horribly bored by not seeing her, but I will provide you with interesting books. You have read nothing of George Sand's; I will send a man to-night to buy her works at Nantes, and those of some other writers that are unknown to you.

"I shall be the first to leave the room; you must not put down your book or come into the little drawing-room till you hear Beatrix in there talking to me. Whenever you see a music-book open on the piano, you can ask if you may stay. You may be positively rude to me if you can; I give you leave; all will be well."

"I know, Camille," said he, with delightful good faith, "that you have the rarest affection for me; it makes me quite sorry that I ever saw Beatrix; but what do you hope for?"

"In a week Beatrix will be crazy about you."

"Good God!" cried he, "is that possible?" and, clasping his hands, he fell on his knees before Camille, who was touched and happy to give him such joy at her own cost.

"Listen to me," said she. "If you speak to the Marquise—not merely in the way of conversation, but if you exchange even a few words with her—if you allow her to question you, if you fail in the wordless part I set you to play, and which is certainly easy enough, understand clearly," and she spoke in a serious tone, "you will lose her for ever."

"I do not understand anything of all this, Camille," cried Calyste, looking at her with adorable guilelessness.

"If you understood, you would not be the exquisite child that you are, the noble, handsome Calyste," said she, taking his hand and kissing it.

And Calyste did what he had never done before; he put his arm round Camille and kissed her gently on the neck, without passion, but tenderly, as he kissed his mother. Mademoiselle des Touches could not restrain a burst of tears.

"Now go, child," said she, "and tell your Viscountess that my carriage is at her orders."

Calyste wanted to stay, but he was obliged to obey Camille's imperious and imperative gesture. He went home in high spirits, for he was sure of being loved within a week by the beautiful Rochefide.

The *mouche* players found in him the Calyste they had lost these two months. Charlotte ascribed the change to her own presence. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was affectionately teasing. The Abbé Grimont tried to read in the Baroness' eyes the reason for the calm he saw there. The Chevalier du Halga rubbed his hands.

The two old maids were as lively as a couple of lizards. The Viscountess owed five francs' worth of accumulated fines. Zéphirine's avarice was so keenly excited that she lamented her inability to see the cards, and was sharply severe on her

sister-in-law, who was distracted from the game by Calyste's good spirits, and who asked him a question now and then without understanding his replies.

The game went on until eleven o'clock. Two players had retired; the Baron and du Halga were asleep in their arm-chairs. Mariotte had made some buckwheat cakes; the Baroness brought out her tea-caddy; and before the Kergarouëts left, the noble house of du Guénic offered its guests a collation, with fresh butter, fruit, and cream, for which the silver teapot was brought out, and the English China tea-service sent to the Baroness by one of her aunts. This air of modern splendor in that antique room, the Baroness' exquisite grace, accustomed as a good Irishwoman to make and pour out tea, a great business with Englishwomen, were really delightful. The greatest luxury would not have given such a simple, unpretending, and dignified effect as this impulse of glad hospitality.

When there was no one left in the room but the Baroness and her son, she looked inquiringly at Calyste.

"What happened this evening at les Touches?" she asked.

Calyste told her of the hope Camille had put into his heart and of her strange instructions.

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Fanny, clasping her hands, and for the first time pitying Mademoiselle des Touches.

Some minutes after Calyste had left, Beatrix, who had heard him leave the house, came into her friend's room, and found her sunk on a sofa, her eyes wet with tears.

"What is the matter, Félicité?" asked the Marquise, with concern.

"That I am forty and in love, my dear!" said Mademoiselle des Touches, in a tone of terrible fury, her eyes suddenly dry and hard. "If only you could know, Beatrix, how many tears I shed daily over the lost days of my youth! To be

loved out of pity, to know that one's pittance of happiness is earned by painful toil, by catlike tricks, by snares laid for the innocence and virtue of a mere boy—is not that shameful? Happily, we find a sort of absolution in the infinitude of passion, in the energy of happiness, in the certainty of being for ever supreme above other women in a young heart, on which our name is graven by unforgettable pleasure and insane self-sacrifice. Yes, if he asked it of me, I would throw myself into the sea at his least signal. Sometimes I catch myself wishing that he would desire it; it would be a sacrifice, and not suicide.

"Oh! Beatrix, in coming here you set me a cruel task! I know how difficult it is to triumph against you; but you love Conti, you are noble and generous, and you will not deceive me; on the contrary, you will help me to preserve my Calyste. I was prepared for the impression you would make on him, but I have not been so foolish as to seem jealous; that would but add fuel to the fire. On the contrary, I announced your arrival, depicting you in such bright colors that you could never come up to the portrait, and unluckily you are handsomer than ever."

This vehement lament, in which truth and untruth were mingled, completely deceived Madame de Rochefide. Claud Vignon had told Conti his reasons for leaving; Beatrix was, of course, informed, so she showed magnanimity by behaving coldly to Calyste; but at this instant there awoke in her that thrill of joy which every woman feels at the bottom of her heart on hearing that she is loved. The love she inspires in any man implies an unfeigned flattery which it is impossible not to appreciate; but when the man belongs to another woman, his homage gives more than joy, it is heavenly bliss. Beatrix sat down by her friend, and was full of little coaxing ways.

"You have not a white hair," said she; "you have not a wrinkle; your temples are smooth still, while I know many a

woman of thirty obliged to cover hers. Look, my dear," she added, raising her curls, "what my journey cost me."

She showed the faintest pucker that ruffled the surface of her exquisite skin; she turned up her sleeve and displayed the same wrinkles on her wrists, where the transparent texture already showed lines, and a network of swollen veins, and three deep marks made a bracelet of furrows.

"Are not these the two spots which can tell no lies, as a writer, investigating our miseries, has said? We must suffer much before we see the truth of his terrible shrewdness; but, happily for us, most men know nothing about it, and do not read that atrocious writer."

"Your letter told me all," replied Camille. "Happiness is not fatuous; you boasted too much of yours. In love, truth is deaf, dumb, and blind. And I, knowing you had reasons for throwing over Conti, dreaded your visit here. My dear, Calyste is an angel; he is as good as he is handsome; the poor innocent will not resist one look from you, he admires you too much not to love on the smallest encouragement; your disdain will preserve him to me. I confess it with the cowardice of true passion: if you take him from me, you kill me. 'Adolphe,' that terrible book by Benjamin Constant, has told us of Adolphe's sufferings; but what of the woman's, heh? He did not study them enough to depict them, and what woman would dare reveal them? They would discredit our sex, humiliate our virtues, add to our vices. Ah! if I may measure them by my fears, these tortures are like the torments of hell. But if he deserts me, my determination is fixed."

"And what have you determined?" asked Beatrix, with an eagerness that was a shock to Camille.

On this the two friends looked at each other with the keenness of two Venetian inquisitors of State, a swift glance, in which their souls met and struck fire like two flints. The Marquise's eyes fell.

"Beside man there is only God!" said the famous woman gravely. "God is the unknown. I should cast myself into it as into a gulf. Calyste has just sworn that he admires you only as he might admire a picture; but you are eight-and-twenty, and in all the splendor of your beauty. So the struggle between him and me has begun by a falsehood. Happily I know how to win."

"And how is that?"

"That, my dear, is my secret. Leave me the advantages of my age. Though Claud Vignon has cast me into the abyss —me, when I had raised myself to a spot which I believed to be inaccessible—I may at least pluck the pale blossoms, etiolated but delicious, which grow at the foot of the precipice."

Madame de Rochefide was moulded like wax by Mademoiselle des Touches, who reveled in savage pleasure as she involved her in her meshes. Camille sent her to bed, nettled with curiosity, tossed between jealousy and generosity, but certainly thinking much about the handsome youth.

"She would be delighted if she could betray me," said Camille to herself, as they kissed and said good-night.

Then, when she was alone, the author made way for the woman—she melted into tears; she filled her hookah with tobacco dipped in opium, and spent the greater part of the night smoking, and thus numbing the tortures of her love, while seeing, through the clouds of smoke, Calyste's charming head.

"What a fine book might be written containing the story of my sorrows?" said she to herself; "but it has been done. Sappho lived before me. Sappho was young! A touching and lovely heroine indeed is a woman of forty! Smoke your hookah, my poor Camille, you have not even the privilege of making a poem out of your woes; this crowns them all."

She did not go to bed till daybreak, mingling tears, spasms of rage, and magnanimous resolutions in the long meditation wherein she sometimes considered the mysteries of the Catholic

religion, of which she had never thought in the course of her reckless life as an artist and an unbelieving writer.

Next day, Calyste, advised by his mother to act exactly on Camille's instructions, came at noon and stole mysteriously up to Mademoiselle des Touches' room, where he found plenty of books. Félicité sat in an armchair by the window, smoking, and gazing alternately at the wild marsh landscape, at the sea, and at Calyste, with whom she exchanged a few words concerning Beatrix. At a certain moment, seeing the Marquise walking in the garden, she went to the window to unfasten the curtains, so that her friend should see her, and drew them to shut out the light, leaving only a strip that fell on Calyste's book.

"I shall ask you to stay to dinner this evening, my child," said she, tumbling his hair, "and you must refuse, looking at Beatrix; you will have no difficulty in making her understand how deeply you regret being unable to remain here."

At about four o'clock Camille left him and went to play the dreadful farce of her false happiness to the Marquise, whom she brought back to the drawing-room. Calyste then came out of the adjoining room; at that moment he felt the shame of his position. The look he gave Beatrix, though watched for by Félicité, was even more expressive than she had expected. Beatrix was beautifully dressed.

"How elegant you are, my sweetheart!" said Camille, when Calyste had left.

These manœuvres went on for six days; they were seconded, without Calyste's knowledge, by the most ingenious conversations between Camille and her friend. There was between the two women a duel without truce, in which the weapons were cunning, feints, generosity, false confessions, astute confidences, in which one hid her love and the other stripped hers bare, while nevertheless the iron sharpness, red hot with Camille's treacherous words, pierced her friend's heart to the core, implanting some of those evil feelings which good women

find it so hard to suppress. Beatrix in the end took offense at the suspicions betrayed by Camille; she thought them dishonoring to both alike; she was delighted to discover in the great authoress the weakness of her sex, and longed for the pleasure of showing her where her superiority ended, how she might be humiliated.

"Well, my dear, what are you going to tell him to-day?" she asked, with a spiteful glance at her friend, when the imaginary lover asked leave to remain. "On Monday we had something to talk over; on Tuesday you had too poor a dinner; on Wednesday you were afraid of annoying the Baroness; on Thursday we were going out together; yesterday you bid him good-by as soon as he opened his mouth. Now, I want him to stay to-day, poor boy!"

"Already, my dear!" said Camille, with biting irony.

Beatrix colored.

"Then stay, Monsieur du Guénic," said Mademoiselle des Touches, assuming a queenly air, as though she were nettled.

Beatrix turned cold and hard; she was crushing, satirical, and intolerable to Calyste, whom Félicité sent off to play *mouche* with Mademoiselle de Kergarouët.

"That girl is not dangerous!" said Beatrix, smiling.

Young men in love are like starving people, the cook's preparations do not satisfy them; they think too much of the end to understand the means. As he returned from les Touches to Guérande, Calyste's mind was full of Beatrix; he did not know what deep feminine skill Félicité was employing to promote his interests—to use a cant phrase. In the course of this week the Marquise had written but one letter to Conti, a symptom of indifference which had not escaped Camille.

Calyste's whole life was concentrated in the short moments when he saw Beatrix; this drop of water, far from quenching his thirst, only increased it. The magic words, "You shall be loved," spoken by Camille and endorsed by his mother, were the talisman by which he checked the fire

of his passion. He tried to kill time; he could not sleep, and cheated his sleeplessness by reading, bringing home a barrow-load of books every evening, as Mariotte expressed it. His aunt cursed Mademoiselle des Touches; but the Baroness, who had often gone up to her son's room on seeing a light there, knew the secret of this wakefulness. Though Fanny had never gotten beyond her timidity as an ignorant girl, and love's books had remained close to her, her motherly tenderness guided her to certain notions; still, the abysses of the sentiment were dark to her and hidden by clouds, and she was very much alarmed at the state in which she saw her son, terrifying herself over the one absorbing and incomprehensible desire that was consuming him.

Calyste had, in fact, but one idea: the image of Beatrix was always before him. During the evening, over the cards, his absence of mind was like his father's slumbers. Finding him so unlike what he had been when he had believed himself in love with Camille, his mother recognized with a sort of terror the symptoms of a genuine passion, a thing altogether unknown in the old family home. Feverish irritability and constant dreaming made Calyste stupid. He would often sit for hours gazing at one figure in the tapestry. That morning she had advised him to go no more to les Touches, but to give up these two women.

"Not go to les Touches!" cried he.

"Nay, go, my dear, go; do not be angry, my darling," replied she, kissing his eyes, which had flashed flame at her.

In this state Calyste was within an ace of losing the fruits of Camille's skilled manœuvres by the Breton impetuosity of his love, which he could no longer master. In spite of his promises to Félicité, he vowed that he would see and speak to Beatrix. He wanted to read her eyes, to drown his gaze in their depths, to study the little details of her dress, to breathe its fragrance, to hear the music of her voice, follow the elegant deliberateness of her movements, embrace her figure in a

glance—to contemplate her, in short, as a great general studies the field on which a decisive battle is to be fought. He wanted her, as lovers want; he was the prey of such desire as closed his ears, dulled his intellect, and threw him into a morbid condition, in which he no longer saw obstacles or distance, and was not even conscious of his body.

It struck him that he might go to les Touches before the hour agreed upon, hoping to find Beatrix in the garden. He knew that she walked there while waiting for breakfast. Mademoiselle des Touches and her friend had been in the morning to see the salt-marshes and the basin with its shore of fine sand, into which the sea oozes, looking like a lake in the midst of the sand-hills; they had come home, and were talking as they wandered about the yellow gravel paths in the garden.

"If this landscape interests you," said Camille, "you should go to le Croisic with Calyste. There are some very fine rocks there, cascades of granite, little bays with natural basins, wonders of capricious variety, and the seashore with thousands of fragments of marble, a whole world of amusement. You will see women *making wood;* that is to say, plastering masses of cow-dung against the wall to dry, and then piling them to keep, like peat in Paris; then, in winter, they warm themselves by that fuel."

"And you will trust Calyste?" said the Marquise, laughing, in a tone which plainly showed that Camille, by sulking with Beatrix the night before, had obliged her to think of Calyste.

"Oh, my dear, when you know the angelic soul of a boy like him you will understand me. In him beauty is as nothing, you must know that pure heart, that guilelessness that is amazed at every step taken in the realm of love. What faith! what candor! what grace! The ancients had good reason to worship beauty as holy.

"Some traveler, I forget whom, tells us that horses in a

state of freedom take the handsomest of them to be their leader. Beauty, my dear, is the genius of matter; it is the hall-mark set by nature on her most perfect creations; it is the truest symbol, as it is the greatest chance. Did any one ever imagine a deformed angel? Do not they combine grace and strength? What has kept us standing for hours together before certain pictures in Italy, in which genius has striven for years to realize one of these caprices of nature? Come, with your hand on your conscience, was it not the ideal of beauty which we combined in our minds with moral grandeur? Well, and Calyste is one of those dreams made real; he has the courage of the lion, who remains quiet without suspecting his sovereignty. When he feels at ease he is brilliant; I like his girlish diffidence. In his heart, my soul is refreshed after all the corruption, the ideas of science, literature, the world, politics—all the futile accessories under which we stifle happiness. I am now what I never was before—I am a child! I am sure of him, but I like to pretend jealousy; it makes him happy. Beside, it is part of my secret."

Beatrix walked on, silent and pensive; Camille was enduring unspoken martyrdom, and flashing side-glances at her that looked like flames.

"Ah, my dear, you—you are happy," said Beatrix, leaning her hand on Camille's arm like a woman weary of some covert resistance.

"Yes! very happy!" replied poor Félicité, with savage bitterness.

The women sank on to a bench, both exhausted. No creature of her sex was ever subjected to more elaborate seduction or more clear-sighted Machiavellism than Madame de Rochefide had been during the last week.

"But I—I who see Conti's infidelities, who swallow them, who——"

"And why do you not give him up?" said Camille, discerning a favorable moment for striking a decisive blow.

"Can I?"

"Oh! poor child——"

They both sat stupidly gazing at a clump of trees.

"I will go and hasten breakfast," said Camille, "this walk has given me an appetite."

"Our conversation has taken away mine," said Beatrix.

Beatrix, a white figure in a morning dress, stood out against the green masses of foliage. Calyste, who had stolen into the garden through the drawing-room, turned down a path, walking slowly to meet the Marquise by chance, as it were; and Beatrix could not help starting a little when she saw him.

"How did I displease you yesterday, madame?" asked Calyste, after a few commonplace remarks had been exchanged.

"Why, you neither please me nor displease me," said she gently.

Her tone, her manner, her delightful grace encouraged Calyste.

"I am indifferent to you?" said he, in a voice husky with the tears that rose to his eyes.

"Must we not be indifferent to each other?" replied Beatrix. "Each of us has a sincere attachment——"

"Oh!" said Calyste eagerly, "I did love Camille; but I do not love her now."

"Then what do you do every day, all the morning long?" asked she, with a perfidious smile. "I cannot suppose that, in spite of her passion for tobacco, Camille prefers her cigar to you; or that, in spite of your admiration for authoresses, you spend four hours in reading novels by women."

"Then you know?" said the innocent boy, his face flushed with the joy of gazing at his idol.

"Calyste!" cried Camille violently, as she appeared on the scene, seizing him by the arm and pulling him some steps; "Calyste, is this what you promised me?"

The Marquise heard this reproof, while Mademoiselle des Touches went off scolding and leading away Calyste; she stood mystified by Calyste's avowal, and unable to understand it. Madame de Rochefide was not so clear-sighted as Claud Vignon. The truth of the terrible and sublime comedy performed by Camille is one of those parts of magnanimous infamy which a woman can conceive of only in the last extremity. It means a breaking heart, the end of her feelings as a woman, and the beginning of a sacrifice, which drags her down to hell or leads her to heaven.

During breakfast, to which Calyste was invited, Beatrix, whose feelings were lofty and proud, had already undergone a revulsion, stifling the germs of love that were sprouting in her heart. She was not hard or cold to Calyste, but her mild indifference wrung his heart. Félicité proposed that they should go on the next day but one to make an excursion through the strange tract of country lying between les Touches, le Croisic, and le Bourg de Batz. She begged Calyste to spend the morrow in finding a boat and some men, in case they should wish to go out by sea. She undertook to supply provisions, horses, and everything necessary to spare them any fatigue in this party of pleasure.

Beatrix cut her short by saying that she would not take the risk of running about the country. Calyste's face, which had expressed lively delight, was suddenly clouded.

"Why, what are you afraid of, my dear?" said Camille.

"My position is too delicate to allow of my compromising, not my reputation, but my happiness," she said with meaning, and she looked at the lad. "You know how jealous Conti is; if he knew——"

"And who is to tell him?"

"Will he not come back to fetch me?"

At these words Calyste turned pale. Notwithstanding Félicité's arguments and those of the young Breton, Madame de Rochefide was inexorable and showed what Camille called

her obstinacy. Calyste, in spite of the hopes Félicité gave him, left les Touches in one of those fits of lover's distress of which the violence often rises to the pitch of madness.

On his return home, Calyste did not quit his room till dinner-time, and went back again soon after. At ten o'clock his mother became uneasy and went up to him; she found him writing in the midst of a quantity of torn papers and rough copy. He was writing to Beatrix, for he distrusted Camille; the Marquise's manner during their interview in the garden had encouraged him strangely.

Never did a first love-letter spring in a burning fount from the soul, as might be supposed. In all youths, as yet uncorrupted, such a letter is produced with a flow too hotly effervescent not to be the elixir of several letters begun, rejected, and re-written.

Here is that sent by Calyste, which he read to his poor, astonished mother. To her, the old house was on fire; her son's love blazed up in it like the flare of a conflagration:

Calyste to Beatrix.

"MADAME:—I loved you when as yet you were but a dream to me; imagine the fervor assumed by my love when I saw you. The dream was surpassed by the reality. My regret is that I have nothing to tell you that you do not know, when I say how beautiful you are; still, perhaps, your beauty never gave rise to so many feelings in any one as in me. You are beautiful in so many ways; I have studied you so thoroughly by thinking of you day and night, that I have penetrated the mystery of your personality, the secrets of your heart, and your misprized refinements. Have you ever been loved as you deserve?

"Let me tell you, then, that there is nothing in you which has not its interpretation in my heart: your pride answers to

mine, the dignity of your looks, the grace of your mien, the elegance of your movements—everything in you is in harmony with the thoughts and wishes hidden in your secret soul; and it is because I can read them that I think myself worthy of you. If I had not become, within these few days, your second self, should I dare speak to you of myself? To read myself would be egotistic; it is you I speak of here, not Calyste.

"To write to you, Beatrix, I have set my twenty years aside; I have stolen a march on myself and aged my mind—or, perhaps, you have aged it by a week of the most horrible torments, caused, innocently indeed, by you. Do not take me for one of those commonplace lovers at whom you laugh with such good reason. What merit is there, indeed, in loving a young, beautiful, clever, noble woman! Alas, I cannot even dream of deserving you! What am I to you? A boy attracted by beauty and moral worth, as an insect is attracted by light. You cannot do anything else than trample on the flowers of my soul, yet all my happiness lies in seeing you spurn them under foot. Absolute devotion, unlimited faith, the maddest passion—all these treasures of a true and loving heart are nothing; they help me to love, they cannot win love.

"Sometimes I wonder that such fervent fanaticism should fail to warm the idol; and when I meet your severe, cold eye, I feel myself turn to ice. Your disdain affects me then and not my adoration. Why? You cannot possibly hate me so much as I love you; so ought the weaker feeling to get the mastery over the stronger?

"I loved Félicité with all the strength of my heart; I forgot her in a day, in an instant, on seeing you. She was a mistake, you are the truth. You, without knowing it, have wrecked my happiness, and you owe me nothing in exchange. I loved Camille without hope, and you give me no hopes; nothing is changed but the divinity. I was a pagan, I am a

Christian; that is all. Only, you have taught me to love—to be loved, does not come till later. Camille says it is not love that loves only for a few days; the love that does not grow day by day is a contemptible passion; to continue growing it must not foresee its end, and she could see the setting of our sun.

"On seeing you, I understood these sayings which I had struggled against with all my youth, all the rage of my desires, all the fierce despotism of my twenty years. Then our great and sublime Camille mingled her tears with mine. So I may love you on earth and in heaven, as we love God. If you loved me, you could not meet me with the reasoning by which Camille annihilated my efforts. We are both young, we can fly on the same wings, under the same sky, and never fear the storm that threatened that eagle.

"But what am I saying? I am carried far beyond the modesty of my hopes. You will cease to believe in the submission, the patience, the mute worship, which I implore you not to wound needlessly. I know, Beatrix, that you cannot love me without falling in your own esteem. And I ask for no return.

"Camille said once that there was an innate fatality in names, as in her own. I felt this fatality in yours when on the pier at Guérande it struck my eyes on the seashore; you will come into my life as Beatrice came into Dante's. My heart will be the pedestal for a white statue—vindictive, jealous, and tyrannous. You are prohibited from loving me; you would endure a thousand deaths; you would be deceived, mortified, unhappy. There is in you a diabolical pride which binds you to the pillar you have laid hold on; you will perish while shaking the temple like Samson. I did not discover all these things; my love is too blind; Camille told me. Here it is not my mind that speaks, but hers; I have no wits when you are in question, a tide of blood comes up from my heart, darkening my intellect with its waves, depriving me of my

powers, paralyzing my tongue, making my knees quake and bend. I can only adore you, whatever you do. Camille calls your firmness obstinacy; I defend you; I believe it to be dictated by virtue. You are only the more beautiful in my eyes. I know my fate; the pride of Brittany is a match for the woman who has made a virtue of hers.

"And so, dear Beatrix, be kind and comforting to me. When the victims were chosen, they were crowned with flowers; you owe me the garlands of compassion and music for the sacrifice. Am I not the proof of your greatness, and will you not rise to the height of my love, scorned in spite of its sincerity, in spite of its undying fires?

"Ask Camille what my conduct has been since the day when she told me that she loved Claud Vignon. I was mute; I suffered in silence. Well, then, for you I could find yet greater strength, if you do not drive me to desperation, if you understand my heroism. One word of praise from you would enable me to bear the torments of martyrdom. If you persist in this cold silence, this deadly disdain, you will make me believe that I am to be feared. Oh, be to me all you can be—charming, gay, witty, affectionate. Talk to me of Gennaro as Camille did of Claud. I have no genius but that of love; there is nothing formidable in me, and in your presence I will behave as though I did not love you.

"Can you reject the prayer of such humble devotion, of a hapless youth, who only asks that his sun should give him light and warm him? The man you love will always see you; poor Calyste has but a few days before him, you will soon be rid of him. So I may go to les Touches again to-morrow, may I not? You will not refuse my arm to guide you around the shores of le Croisic and le Bourg de Batz? If you should not come, that will be an answer, and understood by Calyste."

There were four pages more of close small writing, in which Calyste explained the terrible threat contained in these last

words, by relating the story of his boyhood and life; but he told it in exclamatory phrases; there were many of those dots and dashes lavishly scattered through modern literature in perilous passages, like planks laid before the reader to enable him to cross the gulf. This artless picture would be a repetition of our narrative; if it did not touch Madame de Rochefide, it could scarcely interest those who seek strong sensations; but it made his mother weep and say—

"Then you have not been happy?"

This terrible poem of feeling that had come like a storm on Calyste's heart, and was to be sent like a whirlwind to another, frightened the Baroness; it was the first time in her life that she had ever read a love-letter.

Calyste was standing up; there was one great difficulty: he did not know how to send his letter.

The Chevalier du Halga was still in the sitting-room, where they were playing off the last pool of a very lively *mouche*. Charlotte de Kergarouët, in despair at Calyste's indifference, was trying to charm the old people in the hope of thus securing her marriage. Calyste followed his mother, and came back into the room with the letter in his breast-pocket—it seemed to scorch his heart; he wandered about and up and down the room like a moth that had come in by mistake. At last the mother and son got Monsieur du Halga into the hall, whence they dismissed Mariotte and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's little servant.

"What do they want of the chevalier?" said old Zéphirine to the other old maid.

"Calyste seems to me to be out of his mind," replied she. "He pays no more heed to Charlotte than if she were one of the marsh-girls."

The Baroness had very shrewdly supposed that the Chevalier du Halga must, somewhere about the year 1780, have sailed the seas of gallant adventure, and she advised Calyste to consult him.

"What is the best way to send a letter secretly to a lady?" said Calyste to the chevalier in a whisper.

"You can give the note to her lady's-maid, with a few louis in her hand, for sooner or later the maid is in the secret, and it is best to let her know it from the first," replied the chevalier, who could not suppress a smile; "but it is better to deliver it yourself."

"A few louis!" exclaimed the Baroness.

Calyste went away and fetched his hat; then he flew off to les Touches, and walked like an apparition into the little drawing-room, where he heard Beatrix and Camille talking. They were sitting on the divan, and seemed on the best possible terms. Calyste, with the sudden wit that love imparts, flung himself heedlessly on the divan by the Marquise, seized her hand, and pressed the letter into it, so that Félicité, watchful as she might be, could not see it done. Calyste's heart fluttered with an emotion that was at once acute and delightful, as he felt Beatrix's hand grasp his, and without even interrupting her sentence or seeming surprised, she slipped the letter into her gloves.

"You fling yourself on a woman as if she were a divan," said she with a laugh.

"He has not, however, adopted the doctrine of the Turks!" said Félicité, who could not forbear from this retort.

Calyste rose, took Camille's hand, and kissed it; then he went to the piano and made every note sound in a long scale by running one finger over them. This glad excitement puzzled Camille, who told him to come to speak to her.

"What is it?" she asked in his ear.

"Nothing," said he.

"There is something between them," said Mademoiselle des Touches to herself.

The Marquise was impenetrable. Camille tried to make Calyste talk, hoping that he might betray himself; but the boy made an excuse of the uneasiness his mother would feel,

and he left les Touches at eleven o'clock, not without having stood the fire of a piercing look from Camille, to whom he had never before made this excuse.

After the agitations of a night filled with Beatrix, after he had been into the town twenty times in the course of the morning, in the hope of meeting the answer which did not come, the Marquise's maid came to the Hôtel du Guénic, and gave the following reply to Calyste, who went off to read it in the arbor at the end of the garden:

Beatrix to Calyste.

"You are a noble boy, but you are a boy. You owe yourself to Camille, who worships you. You will not find in me either the perfections that distinguish her or the happiness she lavishes on you. Whatever you may think, it is she who is young and I who am old; her heart is full of treasures, and mine is empty. She is devoted to you in a way you do not appreciate enough; she has no selfishness, and lives wholly in you. I should be full of doubts; I should drag you into a life that is weariful, ignoble, and spoiled by my own fault. Camille is free, she comes and goes at her will; I am a slave. In short, you forget that I love and am loved. The position in which I find myself ought to protect me against any homage. To love me, to tell me that you love me, is an insult. Would not a second lapse place me on the level of the most abandoned women?

"You, who are young and full of delicate feeling, how can you compel me to say things which the heart cannot utter without being torn.

"I preferred the scandal of an irreparable disaster to the shame of perpetual deceit, my own ruin to the loss of my self-respect. In the eyes of many people whose esteem I value, I still stand high; if I should change, I should fall some steps lower. The world is still merciful to women

whose constancy cloaks their illicit happiness, but it is pitiless to a vicious habit.

"I feel neither scorn nor anger; I am answering you with frank simplicity. You are young, you know nothing of the world, you are carried away by imagination, and, like all men of pure life, you are incapable of the reflections induced by disaster. I will go further: If I should be of all women the most mortified; if I had horrible misery to hide; if I were deceived and deserted at last—and, thank God, nothing of that is possible—if, I say, by the vengeance of heaven these things were, no one in the world would ever see me again. And then I could find it in me to kill the man who should speak to me of love, if a man could still find me where I should be. There you have the whole of my mind.

"Perhaps I have to thank you for having written to me. After your letter, and especially after my reply, I may be quite at my ease with you at les Touches, follow the bent of my humor, and be what you ask me to be. I say nothing of the bitter ridicule I should incur if my eyes should cease to express the sentiments of which you complain. To rob Camille a second time would be an evidence of weakness to which no woman could twice resign herself. If I loved you madly, if I were blind, if I were forgetful of everything else, I should always see Camille. Her love for you is a barrier too high to be crossed by any force, even with the wings of an angel; only demons would not recoil from such base treachery.

"In this, my child, lies a world of reasons which noble and refined women keep to themselves, of which you men know nothing, even when a man is so like a woman as you are at this moment.

"Finally, you have a mother who has shown you what a woman's life ought to be; pure and spotless, she has fulfilled her fate nobly; all I know of her has filled my eyes with tears of envy which has risen from the depths of my heart.

I might have been like her! Calyste, this is what your wife ought to be; this is what her life ought to be.

"I will not again cast you back maliciously, as I have done, on little Charlotte, who would bore you from the first, but on some exquisite girl who is worthy of you. If I gave myself to you, I should spoil your life. Either you would fail in faithfulness, in constancy, or you would resolve to devote your life to me: I will be honest—I should take it; I should carry you off I know not whither, far from the world; I should make you very unhappy; I am jealous. I see monsters in a drop of water; I am in despair over odious trifles which many women put up with; there are even inexorable thoughts, originating in myself, not caused by you, which would wound me to death. When a man is not as respectful and as delicate in the tenth year of his happiness as he was on the eve of the day when he was a beggar for a favor, he seems to me a wretch and degrades me in my own eyes. Such a lover no longer believes in the Amadis and Cyrus of my dreams. In our day love is purely mythical; and in you I find no more than the fatuity of a desire which knows not its end. I am not forty; I cannot yet bring my pride to bend to the authority of experience; I know not the love that could make me humble; in fact, I am a woman whose nature is still too youthful not to be detestable. I cannot answer for my moods; all my graciousness is on the surface. Perhaps I have not suffered enough yet to have acquired the indulgent ways, the perfect tenderness that we owe to cruel deceptions. Happiness has its impertinence, and I am very impertinent. Camille will always be your devoted slave, I should be an unreasonable tyrant.

"Indeed, is not Camille set by your side by your good angel, to guard you till you have reached the moment when you must start on the life that is in store for you, and which you must not fail in? I know Félicité! Her tenderness is inexhaustible; she may perhaps lack some of the graces of her

sex, but she shows that vivifying strength, that genius for constancy, and that lofty courage which make everything acceptable. She will see you marry while suffering tortures; she will find you a free Beatrix, if Beatrix fulfills your ideal of woman and answers to your dreams; she will smooth out all the difficulties in your future life. The sale of a single acre of her land in Paris will redeem your estates in Brittany; she will make you her heir—has she not already adopted you as a son? And I, alas! What can I do for your happiness? Nothing.

"Do not be false to an immeasurable affection which has made up its mind to the duties of motherliness. To me she seems most happy—this Camille! The admiration you feel for poor Beatrix is such a peccadillo as women of Camille's age view with the greatest indulgence. When they are sure of being loved they will allow constancy a little infidelity; nay, one of their keenest pleasures is to triumph over the youth of their rivals.

"Camille is superior to other women, all this does not bear upon her; I only say it to reassure your conscience. I have studied Camille well; she is in my eyes one of the grandest figures of our time. She is both clever and kind, two qualities rarely united in a woman; she is generous and simple, two more great qualities seldom found together. I have seen trustworthy treasures in the depths of her heart; it would seem as though Dante had written for her in the 'Paradiso' the beautiful lines on eternal happiness which she was interpreting to you the other evening, ending with *Senza brama sicura richezza.*

"She has talked to me of her fate in life, told me all her experience, and proved to me that love, the object of our desires and dreams, had always evaded her; I replied that she seemed to me a proof of that difficulty of matching anything sublime, which accounts for much unhappiness. Yours is one of the angelic souls whose sister-soul it seems impossible to

find. This misfortune, dear child, is what Camille will spare you; even if she should die for it, she will find you a being with whom you may live happy as a husband.

"I offer you a friend's hand, and trust, not to your heart, but to your sense, to find that we are henceforth to each other a brother and sister, and to terminate our correspondence, which, between les Touches and Guérande, is odd, to say the least of it.

"BEATRIX DE CASTERAN."

The Baroness, in the highest degree excited by the details and progress of her son's love affairs with the beautiful Rochefide, could not sit still in the room, where she was working at her cross-stitch, looking up at every stitch to watch Calyste; she rose from her chair and came up to him with a mixture of diffidence and boldness. The mother had all the graces of a courtesan about to ask a favor.

"Well?" said she, trembling, but not actually asking to see the letter.

Calyste showed it her in his hand, and read it aloud to her. The two noble souls, so simple and ingenuous, discovered in this astute and perfidious reply none of the treachery and snares infused into it by the Marquise.

"She is a noble and high-minded woman!" said the Baroness, whose eyes glistened with moisture. "I will pray to God for her. I never believed that a mother could desert her husband and child and preserve so much virtue. She deserves to be forgiven."

"Am I not right to worship her?" cried Calyste.

"But whither will this love lead you?" said his mother. "Oh! my child, how dangerous are these women of noble sentiments! Bad women are less to be feared. Marry Charlotte de Kergarouët, and release two-thirds of the family estates. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël can achieve this great end by selling a few farms, and the good soul will devote

herself to improving the property. You may leave your children a noble name, a fine fortune——"

"What, forget Beatrix?" said Calyste in a hollow voice, his eyes fixed on the floor.

He left his mother, and went up to his room to reply to this letter.

Madame du Guénic had Madame de Rochefide's words stamped on her heart: she wanted to know on what Calyste founded his hopes. At about this hour the chevalier would be exercising his dog on the mall; the Baroness, sure of finding him there, put on a bonnet and shawl and went out. It was so extraordinary an event to see Madame du Guénic out, excepting at church, or in one of the two pretty alleys that were frequented on fête-days, when she would accompany her husband and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, that, within two hours, every one was saying to every one else, "Madame du Guénic was out to-day; did you see her?" Thus before long the news came to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's ears, and she said to her niece—

"Something very strange is certainly happening at the du Guénics'."

"Calyste is madly in love with the beautiful Marquise de Rochefide," said Charlotte. "I should do better to leave Guérande and go back to Nantes."

At this moment the Chevalier du Halga, surprised at being sought out by the Baroness, had released Thisbe from her cord, recognizing the impossibility of attending to two ladies at once.

"Chevalier, you have had some experience in love affairs?" said the Baroness.

Captain du Halga drew himself up with not a little of the airs of a coxcomb. Madame du Guénic, without naming her son or the Marquise, told him the contents of the love letter, asking him what could be the meaning of such an answer. The chevalier stood with his nose in the air caressing his

chin; he listened with little grimaces; and at last he looked keenly at the Baroness.

"When a thoroughbred horse means to leap a fence, it goes up to it first to smell it and examine it," he said. "Calyste will be the happiest young rogue——"

"Hush!" said the Baroness.

"I am dumb. In old times that was my only point," said the old man. "It is fine weather," he went on after a pause, "the wind is northeasterly. By heaven! how the Belle-Poule danced before that wind on the day—— But," he went on, interrupting himself, "I have a singing in my ears and pains in the false-ribs; the weather will change. You know that the fight of the Belle-Poule was so famous that ladies wore Belle-Poule caps. Madame de Kergarouët was the first to appear at the opera in such a head-dress. 'You are dressed for conquest,' I said to her. The words were repeated in every box."

The Baroness listened politely to the old man, who, faithful to the laws of old-world etiquette, escorted her back to the little street, neglecting Thisbe. He let out the secret of Thisbe's birth. She was the granddaughter of that sweet Thisbe that had belonged to Madame la Comtesse de Kergarouët, the Admiral's first wife. This Thisbe the third was eighteen years old.

The Baroness ran lightly up to Calyste's room, as gleeful as if she were in love herself. Calyste was not there, but Fanny saw a letter on the table addressed to Madame de Rochefide, folded, but not sealed. Irresistible curiosity prompted the anxious mother to read her son's answer. The indiscretion was cruelly punished; she felt horrible anguish when she saw the precipice toward which love was driving Calyste.

Calyste to Beatrix.

"What do I care for the family of du Guénic in such times as we live in, dearest Beatrix! My name is Beatrix, the hap-

piness of Beatrix is my happiness, her life is my life, and all my fortune is in her heart. Our lands have been in pledge these two hundred years, and may remain so for two hundred more; our farmers have them, no one can take them away. To see and love you! That is my religion.

"Marry! The idea has made me heartsick. Are there two such as Beatrix? I will marry no one but you; I will wait twenty years if I must; I am young, and you will always be beautiful. My mother is a saint, and it is not for me to judge her. She never loved! I know how much she has lost, and what sacrifices she has made. You, Beatrix, have taught me to love my mother better; she dwells in my heart with you—there will never be any one else; she is your only rival. Is not this as much as to say that no one shares your throne? So your reassuring letter has no effect on my mind.

"As to Camille, you have only to give me a hint, and I will beg her to tell you herself that I do not love her; she is the mother of my intelligence; nothing more, nothing less. As soon as I saw you she became a sister to me, my friend—my man friend—what you will; but we have no claims on each other beyond those of friendship. I thought she was a woman till the moment when I first saw you. But you show me that Camille is a man; she swims, hunts, rides; she smokes and drinks; she writes, she can analyze a book or a heart; she has not the smallest weakness; she walks on in her strength; she has not your free grace, your step like the flight of a bird, your voice—the voice of love—your arch looks, your gracious demeanor. She is Camille Maupin, and nothing else; she has nothing of the woman about her, and you have everything that I love in woman; I felt from the day when I first saw you that you were mine.

"You will laugh at this feeling, but it has gone on increasing; it strikes me as monstrous that we should be divided; you are my soul, my life, and I cannot live where you are

not. Let me love you! We will fly, we will go far, far from the world, into some country where you will know nobody, and where you will have no one but me and God in your heart. My mother, who loves you, will come some day to live with us. Ireland has many country houses, and my mother's family will surely lend us one. Great God! Let us be off! A boat, some sailors, and we shall be there before any one can guess whither we have fled from the world you dread so greatly.

"You have never been loved; I feel it as I re-read your letter, and I fancy I can perceive that, if none of the reasons of which you speak existed, you would allow yourself to be loved by me. Beatrix, a holy love will wipe out the past.

"Is it possible in your presence to think of anything but you? Oh! I love so much that I could wish you a thousand times disgraced, so as to prove to you the power of my love by adoring you as if you were the holiest of creatures. You call my love for you an insult. Oh, Beatrix, you do not think that! The love of 'a noble child'—you call me so—would do honor to a queen.

"So to-morrow we will wander lover-like along by the rocks and the sea, and you shall tread the sands of old Brittany and consecrate them anew for me. Give me that day of joy, and the transient alms—leaving perhaps, alas! no trace on your memory—will be a perennial treasure to Calyste——"

The Baroness dropped the letter unfinished; she knelt on a chair and put up a silent prayer to God, imploring Him to preserve her son's wits, to deliver him from madness and error, and snatch him back from the ways in which she saw him rushing.

"What are you doing, mother?" said Calyste's voice.

"Praying for you," she replied, looking at him with eyes full of tears. "I have been so wrong as to read this letter. My Calyste is gone mad."

"It is the sweetest form of madness," said the youth, kissing his mother.

"I should like to see this woman, my child."

"Well, mamma, we shall take a boat to-morrow to cross over to le Croisic; come to the jetty."

He sealed his letter and went off to les Touches. The thing which above all others appalled the Baroness was to see that, by sheer force of instinct, feeling could acquire the insight of consummate experience. Calyste had written to Beatrix as he might have done under the guidance of Monsieur du Halga.

One of the greatest joys, perhaps, that a small mind can know is that of duping a great soul and catching it in a snare. Beatrix knew herself to be very inferior to Camille Maupin. This inferiority was not merely in the sum-total of intellectual qualities known as talent, but also in those qualities of the heart that are called passion. At the moment when Calyste arrived at les Touches, with the impetuous haste of first love borne on the pinions of hope, the Marquise was conscious of keen satisfaction in knowing herself to be loved by this charming youth. She did not go so far as to wish to be his accomplice in this feeling; she made it a point of heroism to repress this *capriccio*, as the Italians say, and fancied she would thus be on a par with her friend; she was happy to be able to make her some sacrifice. In short, the vanities peculiar to a Frenchwoman, which constitute the famous *coquetterie* whence she derives her superiority, were in her flattered and amply satisfied; she was tempted by the utmost seduction, and she resisted it; her virtues sang a sweet concert of praise in her ear.

The two women, apparently indolent, were lounging on the divan in that little drawing-room so full of harmony, in the midst of a world of flowers, with the window open, for the north winds had ceased to blow. A melting southerly breeze dimpled the salt-water lake that they could see in front of

them, and the sun scorched the golden sands. Their spirits were as deeply tossed as nature lay calm, and not less burning. Camille, broken on the wheel of the machinery she was working, was obliged to keep a guard over herself, the friendly foe she had admitted into her cage was so prodigiously keen; not to betray her secret she gave herself up to observing the secrets of nature; she cheated her pain by seeking a meaning in the motions of the spheres, and found God in the sublime solitude of the sky.

When once an infidel acknowledges God, he throws himself headlong into Catholicism, which, viewed as a system, is perfect.

That morning Camille had shown the Marquise a face still radiant with the light of her research, carried on during a night spent in lamentation. Calyste was always before her like a heavenly vision. She regarded this beautiful youth, to whom she devoted herself, as her guardian angel. Was it not he who was leading her to the supernal regions where sufferings have an end under the weight of incomprehensible immensity? Still, Camille was made uneasy by Beatrix's triumphant looks. One woman does not gain such an advantage over another without allowing it to be guessed, while justifying herself for having taken it. Nothing could be stranger than this covert moral struggle between the two friends, each hiding a secret from the other, and each believing herself to be the creditor for unspoken sacrifices.

Calyste arrived holding his letter under his glove, ready to slip it into Beatrix's hand. Camille, who had not failed to mark the change in her guest's manner, affected not to look at her, but studied her in a mirror just when Calyste made his entrance. That is the sunken rock for every woman. The cleverest and the most stupid, the most frank and the most astute, are not then mistress of their secret; at that moment it blazes out to another woman's eyes. Too much reserve or too much freedom, an open and a beaming glance, or a mys-

terious droop of the eyelids—everything then reveals the feeling above all others difficult to conceal, for indifference is so absolutely cold that it can never be well acted. Women have the genius of shades of manner—they use them too often not to know them all—and on these occasions they take in a rival from head to foot at a glance; they see the slightest twitch of a foot under a petticoat, the most imperceptible start in the figure, and know the meaning of what to a man seems to have none. Two women watching one another play one of the finest comedies to be seen.

"Calyste has committed some folly," thought Camille, observing in both of them the indefinable look of persons who understand each other.

There was no formality or affected indifference in the Marquise now; she looked at Calyste as if he belonged to her. Calyste explained matters; he reddened like a guilty creature, like a happy lover. He had just settled everything for their excursion on the morrow.

"Then you are really going, my dear?" said Camille.

"Yes," said Beatrix.

"How did you know that?" said Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste.

"I have come to ask," he replied, at a glance shot at him by Madame de Rochefide, who did not wish her friend to have any suspicion of their correspondence.

"They have already come to an understanding," said Camille to herself, catching this look by a side-glance from the corner of her eye. "It is all over; there is nothing left to me but to disappear."

And under the pressure of this thought, a deathlike change passed over her face that gave Beatrix a chill.

"What is the matter, dear?" said she.

"Nothing. Then, Calyste, will you send on my horses and yours so that we may find them ready on the other side of le Croisic and ride back through le Bourg de Batz? We

will breakfast at le Croisic and dine here. You will undertake to find boatmen. We will start at half-past eight in the morning. Such fine scenery!" she added to Beatrix. "You will see Cambremer, a man who is doing penance on a rock for having murdered his son. Oh! you are in a primitive land where men do not feel like the common herd. Calyste will tell you the story."

She went into her room; she was stifling. Calyste delivered his letter and followed Camille.

"Calyste, she loves you, I believe; but you are hiding something; you have certainly disobeyed my injunctions."

"She loves me!" said he, dropping into a chair.

Camille looked out at the door. Beatrix had vanished. This was strange. A woman does not fly from a room where the man is whom she loves and whom she is certain to see again, unless she has something better to do. Mademoiselle des Touches asked herself, "Can she have a letter from Calyste?" But she thought the innocent lad incapable of such audacity.

"If you have disobeyed me, all is lost by your own fault," said she gravely. "Go and prepare for the joys of to-morrow."

She dismissed him with a gesture which Calyste could not rebel against. There are silent sorrows that are despotically eloquent. As he went to le Croisic to find the boatmen, Calyste had some qualms of fear. Camille's speech bore a stamp of doom that revealed the foresight of a mother.

Four hours later, when he returned, very tired, counting on dining at les Touches, he was met at the door by Camille's maid, who told him that her mistress and the Marquise could not see him this evening. Calyste was surprised, and wanted to question the maid, but she shut the door and vanished.

Six o'clock was striking by the clocks of Guérande. Calyste went home, asked for some dinner, and then played *mouche*, a prey to gloomy meditations. These alternations of

joy and grief, the overthrow of his hopes following hard upon what seemed the certainty that he was loved, crushed the young soul that had been soaring heavenward to the sky, and had risen so high that the fall must be tremendous.

"What ails you, my Calyste?" his mother whispered to him.

"Nothing," said he, looking at her with eyes whence the light of his soul and the flame of love had died out.

It is not hope but despair that gives the measure of our ambitions. We give ourselves over in secret to the beautiful poems of hope, while grief shows itself unveiled.

"Calyste, you are not at all nice," said Charlotte, after vainly wasting on him those little provincial teasing ways which always degenerate into annoyance.

"I am tired," he said, rising and bidding the party good-night.

"Calyste is much altered," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"*We* haven't fine gowns covered with lace; we don't flourish our sleeves like this; we don't sit so, or know how to look on one side and wriggle our heads," said Charlotte, imitating and caricaturing the Marquise's airs and attitude and looks. "We haven't a voice with a squeak in the head, or a little interesting cough, *heugh! heugh!* like the sigh of a ghost; we are so unfortunate as to have robust health, and be fond of our friends without any nonsense; when we look at them we do not seem to be stabbing them with a dart, or examining them with a hypocritical glance. We don't know how to droop our heads like a weeping willow, and appear quite affable merely by raising it, so!"

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël could not help laughing at her niece's performance; but neither the chevalier nor the Baron understood this satire of the country on Paris.

"But the Marquise de Rochefide is very handsome," said the old lady.

"My dear," said the Baroness to her husband, "I happen to know that she is going to-morrow to le Croisic; we will walk down there. I should very much like to meet her."

While Calyste was racking his brain to divine why the door of les Touches should have been closed in his face, a scene was taking place between the two friends which was to have its effect on the events of the morrow. Calyste's letter had given birth to unknown emotions in Madame de Rochefide's heart. A woman is not often the object of a passion so youthful, so guileless, so sincere and absolute as was this boy's. Beatrix had loved more than she had been loved. After being a slave she felt an unaccountable longing to be the tyrant in her turn.

In the midst of her joy, as she read and re-read Calyste's letter, a cruel thought pierced her like a stab. What had Calyste and Camille been about together since Claud Vignon's departure? If Calyste did not love Camille, and Camille knew it, what did they do in those long mornings? The memory of her brain insidiously compared this remark with all Camille had said. It was as though a smiling devil held up before her, as in a mirror, the portrait of her heroic friend, with certain looks, certain gestures, which finally enlightened Beatrix. Far from being Félicité's equal, she was crushed by her; far from deceiving her, it was she who was deceived; she herself was but a toy that Camille wanted to give the child she loved with an extraordinary and never vulgar passion.

To a woman like Beatrix this discovery was a thunderbolt. She recalled every detail of the past week. In an instant Camille's part and her own lay before her in their fullest development; she saw herself strangely abased. In the rush of her jealous hatred she fancied she detected in Camille some plot of revenge on Conti. All the events of the past two years had perhaps led up to these two weeks. Once started on the downward slope of suspicions, hypotheses, and anger,

Beatrix did not check herself; she walked up and down her rooms, spurred by impulses of passion, or, sitting down now and again, tried to make a plan; still, until the dinner-hour, she remained a prey to indecision, and only went down when dinner was served without changing her dress.

On seeing her rival come in, Camille guessed everything. Beatrix, in morning dress, had a cold look and an expression of reserve, which to an observer so keen as Camille betrayed the animosity of embittered feelings. Camille immediately left the room and gave the order that had so greatly astonished Calyste; she thought that if the guileless lad, with his insane adoration, came into the middle of the quarrel he might never see Beatrix again, and compromise the future of his passion by some foolish bluntness. She meant to fight out this duel of dupery without any witness. Beatrix, with no one to uphold her, must certainly yield. Camille knew how shallow her soul was, and how mean her pride, to which she had justly given the name of obstinacy.

The dinner was gloomy. Both the women had too much spirit and good taste to have any explanation before the servants, or when they might listen at the doors. Camille was gentle and kind; she felt herself so much the superior! The Marquise was hard and biting; she knew she was being fooled like a child. There was, all through dinner, a warfare of looks, shrugs, half-spoken words, to which the servants could have no clue, but which gave warning of a terrible storm. When they were going upstairs again Camille mischievously offered Beatrix her arm; the Marquise affected not to see, and rushed forward alone. As soon as coffee was served, Mademoiselle des Touches said to her servant, "You can go," and this was the signal for battle.

"The romances you act out, my dear, are rather more dangerous than those you write," said the Marquise.

"They have, however, one great merit," said Camille, taking a cigarette.

"What is that?" asked Beatrix.

"They are unpublished, my angel."

"Will that in which you have plunged me make a book?"

"I have no genius for the task of Œdipus; you have the wit and beauty of the sphinx, I know, but do not ask me any riddles; speak out, my dear Beatrix."

"When in order to make men happy, to amuse them, please them, dispel their annoyances, we appeal to the devil himself to help us——"

"The men blame us afterward for our endeavor, and believe it to be dictated by a spirit of depravity," said Camille, taking her cigarette from her lips to interrupt her friend.

"They forget the love which carried us away, and which justified our excesses—for whither may we not be carried? But they are only playing out their part as men, they are ungrateful and unjust," said Beatrix. "Women know each other; they know how truly lofty and noble their attitude is under all circumstances—nay, I may say, how virtuous.

"Still, Camille, I have begun to perceive the truth of certain remarks I have heard you complain of. Yes, my dear, there is something of the man in you; you behave like men; nothing checks you; and if you have not all their merits your mind conducts itself like theirs, and you share their contempt for us women. I have no reason to be pleased with you, my dear, and I am too frank to conceal the fact. Nobody, perhaps, will ever inflict so deep a wound on my heart as that I am now suffering from. Though you are not always a woman in love matters, you become one again in revenge. Only a woman of genius could have discovered the tenderest spot in our delicate sentiments—I am speaking of Calyste, and of the trickery, my dear, for that is the right word, that you have employed against me. How low you have fallen, you, Camille Maupin; and to what end?"

"Still and still more the sphinx," said Camille, smiling.

"You wanted to make me throw myself at Calyste's head;

I am still too young for such doings. To me love is love, with its intolerable jealousy and despotic demands. I am not a writer; it is not possible to me to find ideas in feelings——"

"You think yourself capable of loving foolishly?" Camille asked her. "Be quite easy, you still have all your wits about you. You malign yourself, my dear; you are cold enough for your head always to remain supreme judge of the achievements of your heart."

This epigram brought the color to the Marquise's face; she shot a look full of hatred, an envenomed look, at Camille; and at once, without stopping to choose them, let fly all the sharpest arrows in her quiver. Camille, smoking her cigarettes, listened calmly to this furious attack, bristling with such virulent abuse that it is impossible to record it. Beatrix, provoked by her adversary's imperturbable manner, fell back on odious personalities and Mademoiselle des Touches' age.

"Is that all?" asked Camille, blowing a cloud of smoke. "Are you in love with Calyste?"

"Certainly not."

"So much the better," replied Camille. "I am, and far too much for my happiness. He has, no doubt, a fancy for you. You are the loveliest blonde in the world, and I am as brown as a mole; you are slim and slender, my figure is too dignified. In short, you are young; that is the great fact, and you have not spared me. You have made an abuse of your advantages over me as a woman, neither more nor less than as a comic paper makes an abuse of humor. I have done all in my power to prevent what is now inevitable," and she raised her eyes to the ceiling. "However little I may seem to be a woman, I still have enough of the woman in me for a rival to need my help in order to triumph over me!" This cruel speech, uttered with an air of perfect innocence, went to the Marquise's heart. "You must think me a very idiotic person if you believe all that Calyste tries to make you believe

about me. I am neither lofty nor mean; I am a woman, and very much a woman. Throw off your airs and give me your hand," said Camille, taking possession of Beatrix's hand. "You do not love Calyste, that is the truth—is it not? Then do not get in a rage! Be stern with him to-morrow, cold and hard, and he will end by submitting after the scolding I shall give him, for I have not exhausted the resources of our arsenal, and, after all, pleasure always gets the better of desire.

"But Calyste is a Breton. If he persists in paying you his addresses, tell me honestly, and you can go at once to a little country-house of mine at six leagues from Paris, where you will find every comfort, and where Conti can join you. If Calyste slanders me! Why, good heavens! The purest love lies six times a day; its illusions prove its strength."

There was a proud coldness in Camille's expression that made the Marquise uneasy and afraid. She did not know what answer to make.

Camille struck the final blow.

"I am more trusting and less bitter than you," she went on. "I do not imagine that you intended to hide under recrimination an attack which would imperil my life; you know me; I should not survive the loss of Calyste, and I must lose him sooner or later. But, indeed, Calyste loves me, and I know it."

"Here is his answer to a letter from me in which I wrote only of you," said Beatrix, holding out Calyste's letter.

Camille took it and read it. As she read her eyes filled with tears; she wept, as all women weep in acute suffering.

"Good God!" said she. "He loves her! Then I must die without ever having been understood or loved!"

She sat for some minutes with her head resting on her friend's shoulder; her pain was genuine; she felt in her own soul the same terrible blow that Madame du Guénic had received on reading this letter.

"Do you love him?" said she, sitting up and looking at

Beatrix. "Do you feel for him that infinite devotion which triumphs over all suffering and survives scorn, betrayal, even the certainty of never being loved again? Do you love him for himself, for the very joy of loving?"

"My dearest friend!" said the Marquise, much moved. "Well, be content, I will leave to-morrow."

"Do not go away; he loves you, I see it! And I love him so well that I should be in despair if I saw him miserable and unhappy. I had dreamed of many things for him; but if he loves you, that is all at an end."

"Yes, Camille, I love him," said the Marquise with delightful simplicity, but coloring.

"You love him, and you can resist him!" cried Camille. "No, you do not love him!"

"I do not know what new virtues he has aroused in me, but he has certainly made me ashamed of myself," said Beatrix. "I could wish to be virtuous and free, so as to have something else to sacrifice to him beside the remnants of a heart and disgraceful bonds. I will not accept an incomplete destiny either for him or for myself."

"Cold brain! it can love and calculate!" cried Camille, with a sort of horror.

"Whatever you please, but I will not blight his life or be a stone round his neck, an everlasting regret. As I cannot be his wife, I will not be his mistress. He has—you will not laugh at me? No? Well, then, his beautiful love has purified me."

Camille gave Beatrix a look—the wildest, fiercest look that ever a jealous woman flung at her rival.

"On that ground," said she, "I fancied I stood alone. Beatrix, that speech has parted us for ever; we are no longer friends. We are at the beginning of a hideous struggle. Now, I tell you plainly, you must succumb or fly."

Félicité rushed away into her own room after showing to Beatrix, who was amazed, a face like an infuriated lioness.

"Are you coming to le Croisic to-morrow?" said Camille, lifting the curtain.

"Certainly," said the Marquise loftily; "I will not fly—nor will I succumb."

"I play with my hand on the table," retorted Camille; "I shall write to Conti."

Beatrix turned as white as her gauze scarf.

"For each of us life is at stake," replied Beatrix, who did not know what to decide on.

The violent passions to which this scene had given rise between the two women subsided during the night. They both reasoned with themselves and came back to a reliance on the perfidious temporizing which fascinates most women—an excellent system between them and men, but a bad one between woman and woman. It was in the midst of this last storm that Mademoiselle des Touches heard the great voice which dominates even the bravest. Beatrix listened to the counsels of worldly wisdom; she feared the contempt of society. So Félicité's last master-stroke, weighted with the accents of intense jealousy, was perfectly successful. Calyste's blunder was remedied, but any fresh mistake might ruin his hopes forever.

The month of August was drawing to a close, the sky was magnificently clear. On the horizon the ocean, like a southern sea, had a hue as of molten silver, and fluttered to the strand in sparkling ripples. A sort of glistening vapor, produced by the sun's rays falling directly on the sand, made an atmosphere at least equal to that of the tropics. The salt blossomed into little white stars on the surface of the salt-pans. The laborious marshmen, dressed in white on purpose to defy the heat of the sun, were at their post by daybreak armed with their long rakes, some leaning against the mud-walls dividing the plots, and watching this process of natural chemistry, familiar to them from their infancy; others playing with

their little ones and wives. Those green dragons called excisemen smoked their pipes in peace. There was something Oriental in the picture, and certainly a Parisian, suddenly dropped there, would not have believed that he was in France.

The Baron and Baroness, who had made a pretext of their wish to see how the salt-raking was going on, were on the jetty, admiring the silent scene, where no sound was to be heard but the sea moaning with regular rhythm, where boats cut through the water, and the green belt of cultivated land was all the more lovely in its effect because it is so uncommon on the desert shores of the ocean.

"Well, my friends, I shall have seen the marshes of Guérande once more before I die," said the Baron to the marshmen, who stood in groups at the fringe of the marsh to greet him.

"As if the du Guénics died!" said one of the men.

At this moment the little party from les Touches came down the narrow road. The Marquise led the way alone, Calyste and Camille followed arm in arm. About twenty yards behind them came Gasselin.

"There are my father and mother," said Calyste to Camille.

The Marquise stopped. Madame du Guénic felt the most vehement repulsion at the sight of Beatrix, though she was dressed to advantage, in a broad-brimmed Leghorn hat trimmed with blue cornflowers, her hair waved beneath it; a dress of gray linen stuff, and a blue sash with long ends; in short, the garb of a princess disguised as a shepherdess.

"She has no heart!" said Fanny to herself.

"Mademoiselle," said Calyste to Camille, "here are Madame du Guénic and my father."

Then he added to his parents—

"Mademoiselle des Touches and Madame la Marquise de Rochefide, *née* de Casteran—my father."

The Baron bowed to Mademoiselle des Touches, who bowed with an air of humble gratitude to the Baroness.

"She," thought the observant Fanny, "really loves my boy; she seems to be thanking me for having brought him into the world."

"You, like me, are come to see if the yield is good; but you have more reasons than I for curiosity, mademoiselle," said the Baron to Camille, "for you have property here."

"Mademoiselle is the richest owner of them all," said one of the marshmen; "and God preserve her, for she is a very good lady!"

The two parties bowed and went their way.

"You would never suppose Mademoiselle des Touches to be more than thirty," said the good man to his wife. "She is very handsome. And Calyste prefers that jade of a Parisian Marquise to that good daughter of Brittany?"

"Alas, yes!" said the Baroness.

A boat was lying at the end of the jetty; they got in, but not in high spirits. Beatrix was cold and dignified. Camille had scolded Calyste for his disobedience and explained to him the position of his love affair. Calyste, sunk in gloomy despair, cast eyes at Beatrix, in which love and hatred struggled for the upper hand.

Not a word was spoken during the short passage from the jetty of Guérande to the extreme point of the harbor of le Croisic, the spot where the salt is shipped, being brought down to the shore by women, in large earthen crocks, which they carry on their heads, holding them in such a way as to look like caryatides. These women are barefoot and wear a very short skirt. Many of them leave the kerchief that covers their shoulders to fly loose, and several wear only a shift, and are the proudest, for the less clothes they wear the more they display their modest beauties.

The little Danish bark was taking in her cargo. Thus the landing of these two beautiful ladies excited the curiosity of the salt-carriers; and partly to escape them, as well as to do Calyste a service, Camille hurried on toward the rocks, leav-

ing him with Beatrix. Gasselin lingered at least two hundred yards behind his master.

On the seaward side the peninsula of le Croisic is fringed with granite rocks so singularly grotesque in form that they can only be appreciated by travelers who are able from experience to make comparisons between the different grand spectacles of wild nature. The rocks of le Croisic have, perhaps, the same superiority over other similar scenes that the road to the Grande Chartreuse is admitted to have over other narrow gorges. Neither the Corsican shore, where the granite forms very remarkable reefs, nor that of Sardinia, where nature has reveled in grand and terrible effects, nor the basaltic formations of northern seas, have quite so distinctive a character. Fancy seems to have disported itself there in endless arabesques, where the most grotesque shapes mingle or stand forth. Every form may be seen there. Imagination may, perhaps, be weary of this vast collection of monsters, among which, in furious weather, the sea rushes in, and has at last polished down all the rough edges.

Under a natural vault, arched with a boldness only faintly imitated by Brunelleschi—for the greatest efforts of art are but a timid counterpart of some work of nature—you will find a basin polished like a marble bath and strewn with smooth, fine white sand, in which you may bathe in safety in four feet of tepid water. As you walk on you admire the cool little creeks, under shelter of porticoes rough-hewn but stately, like those of the Pitti palace—another imitation of the freaks of nature. The variety is infinite; nothing is lacking that the most extravagant fancy could invent or wish for.

There is even a large shrub of box,* a thing so rare on the shore of the Atlantic that perhaps this is the only specimen. This box-shrub, the greatest curiosity in le Croisic, where trees cannot grow, is at about a league from the port, on the utmost headland of the coast. On one of the promon-

* *Buis*, "whence (says Balzac) the word *buisson*," shrub or bush.

tories formed by the granite, rising so high above the sea that the waves cannot reach it even in the wildest storms, and facing the south, the floods have worn a hollow shelf about four feet deep. In this cleft, chance, or perhaps man, has deposited soil enough to enable a box, sown by some bird, to grow thick and closely shorn. The gnarled roots would indicate an age of at least three hundred years. Below it the rock falls sheer.

Some shock, of which the traces are stamped in indelible characters on this coast, has swept off the fragments of granite I know not whither. The sea comes, without breaking over any shoals, to the bottom of this cliff, where the water is more than five hundred feet deep. On either hand some reefs, just beneath the surface, form a sort of large *cirque*, traceable by the foaming breakers. It needs some courage and resolution to climb to the top of this little Gibraltar; its cap is almost spherical, and a gust of wind might carry the inquirer into the sea, or, which would be worse, on to the rocks below. This giant sentinel is like the lantern towers of old châteaux, whence miles of country could be scanned and attacks guarded against; from its height are seen the steeple and the thrifty fields of le Croisic, the sand-hills that threaten to encroach on the arable land, and which have invaded the neighborhood of le Bourg de Batz. Some old men declare that there was, long ago, a castle on this spot. The sardine fishers have a name for this headland, which can be seen from afar at sea; but I must be forgiven for having forgotten that Breton name, as hard to pronounce as it is to remember.

Calyste led Beatrix toward this height, whence the view is superb, and where the forms of the granite surpass all the surprises they can have caused along the sandy margin of the shore.

It is vain to explain why Camille had hurried on in front; like a wounded animal, she longed for solitude; she lost herself in the grottoes, reappeared on the boulders, chased the

crabs out of their holes or discovered them in the very act of their eccentric behavior. Not to be inconvenienced by her woman's skirts, she had put on Turkish trousers with embroidered frills, a short blouse, and a felt hat; and, by way of a traveler's staff, she carried a riding-whip, for she was always vain of her strength and agility. Thus attired, she was a hundred times handsomer than Beatrix; she had tied a little red, China silk shawl across her bosom and knotted behind, as we wrap a child. For some little time Beatrix and Calyste saw her flitting over rocks and rifts like a will-o'-the-wisp, trying to stultify grief by facing perils.

She was the first to arrive at the box-cliff, and sat down in the shade of one of the clefts, lost in meditation. What could such a woman as she do in old age, after drinking the cup of fame which all great talents, too greedy to sip the dull driblets of vanity, drain at one draught? She has since confessed that then and there, one of the coincidences suggested by a mere trifle, by one of the accidents which count for nothing with ordinary people, though they open a gulf of meditation to a great soul, brought her to a decision as to the strange deed, which was afterward the close of her social career. She drew out of her pocket a little box in which she had brought, in case of thirst, some strawberry pastilles; she ate several; but as she sucked them, she could not help reflecting that the strawberries, which were no more, yet lived by their qualities. Hence she concluded that it might be the same with us. The sea offered her an image of the infinite. No great mind can get away from the infinite, granting the immortality of the soul, without being brought to infer some religious future. This idea still haunted her when she smelt at her scent-bottle of Eau de Portugal.

Her manœuvres for handing Beatrix over to Calyste then struck her as very sordid; she felt the woman die in her, and she emerged as the noble angelic being hitherto veiled in the flesh. Her vast intellect, her learning, her acquirements, her

spurious loves had brought her face to face with what? Who could have foretold it? With the yearning mother, the consoler of the sorrowing—the Roman Church—so mild toward repentance, so poetical to poets, so artless with children, so deep and mysterious to wild and anxious spirits, that they can for ever plunge deeper into it and still satisfy their inextinguishable curiosity which is constantly excited.

She glanced back at the devious ways to which she had been led by Calyste, comparing them to the tortuous paths among these rocks. Calyste was still in her eyes the lovely messenger from heaven, a divine leader. She smothered earthly in sacred love.

After walking on for some time in silence, Calyste, at an exclamation from Beatrix at the beauty of the ocean, very different from the Mediterranean, could not resist drawing a comparison between that sea and his love, in its purity and extent, its agitations, its depth, its eternity.

"It has a rock for its shore," said Beatrix with a little mocking laugh.

"When you speak to me in that tone," replied he with a heavenly flash, "I see you and hear you, and I can find an angel's patience; but when I am alone, you would pity me if you could see me. My mother cries over my grief."

"Listen, Calyste, this must come to an end," said the Marquise, stepping down on to the sandy path. "Perhaps we are now in the one propitious spot for the utterance of such things, for never in my life have I seen one where nature was more in harmony with my thoughts. I have seen Italy, where everything speaks of love; I have seen Switzerland, where all is fresh and expressive of true happiness, laborious happiness, where the verdure, the calm waters, the most placid outlines are overpowered by the snow-crowned Alps; but I have seen nothing which more truly paints the scorching barrenness of my life than this little plain, withered by sea-gales, corroded by salt mists, where melancholy tillage struggles in the face of the im-

mense ocean and under the hedgerows of Brittany, whence rise the towers of your Guérande.

"Well, Calyste, that is Beatrix. Do not attach yourself to that. I love you, but I will never be yours, for I am conscious of my inward desolation. Ah! you can never know how cruel I am to myself when I tell you this. No, you shall never see your idol—if I am your idol—stoop; it shall not fall from the height where you have set it. I have now a horror of a passion which the world and religion alike reprobate; I will be humbled no more, nor will I steal happiness. I shall remain where I am; I shall be the sandy, unfertile desert, without verdure or flowers, which lies before you."

"And if you should be deserted?" said Calyste.

"Then I should go and beg for mercy. I would humble myself before the man I have sinned against, but I would never run the risk of rushing into happiness which I know would end."

"End?" cried Calyste.

"End," repeated the Marquise, interrupting the rhapsody into which her lover was plunging, by a tone which reduced him to silence.

This contradiction gave rise in the youth's soul to one of those wordless rages which are known only to those who have loved without hope. He and Beatrix walked on for about three hundred yards in utter silence, looking neither at the sea, nor the rocks, nor the fields of le Croisic.

"I should make you so happy!" said Calyste.

"All men begin by promising us happiness, and they bequeath to us shame, desertion, disgust. I have nothing of which to accuse the man to whom I ought to be faithful; he made me no promises; I went to him. But the only way to make my fault less is to make it eternal."

"Say at once, madame, that you do not love me! I who love you, know by myself that love does not argue, it sees nothing but itself, there is no sacrifice I could not make for

it. Command me, and I will attempt the impossible. The man who of old scorned his mistress for having thrown her glove to the lions and commanded him to rescue it did not love! He misprized your right to test us, to make sure of our love, and never to lay down your arms but to superhuman magnanimity. To you I would sacrifice my family, my name, my future life."

"What an insult lies in that word sacrifice!" replied she in a reproachful tone, which made Calyste feel all the folly of his expression.

Only women who loved wholly, or utter coquettes, can take a word as a fulcrum, and spring to prodigious heights; wit and feeling act on the same lines; but the woman who loves is grieved, the coquette is contemptuous.

"You are right," said Calyste, dropping two tears, "the word can only be applied to the achievement you demand of me."

"Be silent," said Beatrix, startled by a reply in which for the first time Calyste really expressed his love. "I have done wrong enough. Do not tempt me."

They had just reached the base of the box-cliff. Calyste felt intoxicating joys in helping the Marquise to climb the rock; she was bent on mounting to the very top. The poor boy thought it the height of rapture to support her by the waist, to feel her slightly tremulous: she needed him! The unhoped-for joy turned his brain, he saw nothing, he put his arm around her body.

"Well!" she said with an imperious look.

"You will never be mine?" he asked in a voice choked by a storm in his blood.

"Never, my dear," said she. "To you I can only be Beatrix—a dream. And is not a dream sweet? We shall know no bitterness, no regrets, no repentance."

"And you will return to Conti?"

"There is no help for it."

"Then you shall never more be any man's," cried Calyste, flinging her from him with mad violence.

He listened for her fall before throwing himself after her, but he only heard a dull noise, the harsh rending of stuff, and the heavy sound of a body falling on earth. Instead of tumbling head foremost, Beatrix had turned over; she had fallen into the box-tree; but she would have rolled to the bottom of the sea, nevertheless, if her gown had not caught on a corner, and, by tearing, checked the force of her fall on the bush.

Mademoiselle des Touches, who had witnessed the scene, could not call out, for she was aghast, and could only signal to Gasselin to hasten up. Calyste leaned over, prompted by a fierce sort of curiosity; he saw Beatrix as she lay, and shuddered. She seemed to be praying; she thought she must die, she felt the box-tree giving way. With the sudden presence of mind inspired by love, and the supernatural agility of youth in the face of danger, he let himself down the nine feet of rock by his hands, clinging to the rough edges, to the little shelf, where he was in time to rescue the Marquise by taking her in his arms, at the risk of their both falling into the sea. When he caught Beatrix she became unconscious; but he could dream that she was his, wholly his, in this aerial bed where they might have to remain a long time, and his first feeling was an impulse of gladness.

"Open your eyes, forgive me!" said Calyste. "Or we die together."

"Die?" said she, opening her eyes and unsealing her pale lips.

Calyste received the word with a kiss, and then was aware of a spasmodic thrill in the Marquise, which was ecstasy to him. At that instant Gasselin's nailed shoes were audible above them. Camille followed the Breton, and they were anxiously considering the means of saving the lovers.

"There is but one way, mademoiselle," said Gasselin,

"OPEN YOUR EYES, FORGIVE ME!" SAID CALYSTE, "OR WE DIE TOGETHER."



"I will let myself down; they will climb up on my shoulders, and you will give them your hand."

"And you?" said Camille.

The man seemed astonished at being held of any account when his young master was in danger.

"It will be better to fetch a ladder from le Croisic," said Camille.

"She is a knowing one, she is!" said Gasselin to himself, as he went off.

Beatrix, in a feeble voice, begged to be laid on the ground; she felt faint. Calyste laid her down on the cool earth between the rock and the box-tree.

"I saw you, Calyste," said Camille. "Whether Beatrix dies or is saved, this must never be anything but an accident."

"She will hate me!" he cried, his eyes full of tears.

"She will worship you," replied Camille. "This is an end to our excursion; she must be carried to les Touches. What would have become of you if she had been killed?" she said.

"I should have followed her."

"And your mother?—and," she softly added after a pause, "and me?"

Calyste stood pale, motionless, and silent, his back against the granite. Gasselin very soon returned from one of the little farms that lie scattered among the fields, running with a ladder he had borrowed. Beatrix had somewhat recovered her strength. When Gasselin had fixed the ladder, the Marquise, helped by Gasselin, who begged Calyste to put Camille's red shawl round Beatrix, under her arms, and to give him up the ends, climbed up to the little plateau, where Gasselin took her in his arms like a child, and carried her down to the shore.

"Death I would not say nay to—but pain!" said she in a weak voice to Mademoiselle des Touches.

The faintness and shock from which Beatrix was suffering made it necessary that she should be carried as far as the farm

whence Gasselin had borrowed the ladder. Calyste, Gasselin, and Camille took off such garments as they could dispense with, and made a sort of mattress on the ladder, on which they laid Beatrix, carrying it like a litter. The farm-people offered their bed. Gasselin hurried off to the spot where the horses were waiting for them, took one, and fetched a surgeon from le Croisic, after ordering the boatmen to come up the creek that lay nearest to the farm. Calyste, sitting on a low stool, answered Camille's remarks with nods and rare monosyllables, and Mademoiselle des Touches was equally uneasy as to Beatrix's condition and Calyste's.

After being bled the patient felt better; she could speak; she consented to go in the boat; and at about five in the afternoon they crossed to Guérande, where the town doctor was waiting for her. The news of the accident had spread in this deserted and almost uninhabited land with amazing rapidity.

Calyste spent the night at les Touches at the foot of Beatrix's bed with Camille. The doctor promised that by next morning the Marquise would suffer from nothing worse than stiffness. Through Calyste's despair a great happiness beamed. He was at the foot of Beatrix's bed watching her asleep or waking; he could study her pale face, her lightest movements. Camille smiled bitterly as she recognized in the lad all the symptoms of a passion such as tinges the soul and mind of a man by becoming a part of his life at a time when no thought, no cares counteract this torturing mental process.

Calyste would never discern the real woman in Beatrix. How guilelessly did the young Breton allow her to read his most secret soul! Why, he fancied she was his, merely because he found himself here, in her room, admiring her in the disorder of the bed. He watched Beatrix in her slightest movement with rapturous attention; his face expressed such sweet curiosity, his ecstasy was so artlessly betrayed, that

there was a moment when the two women looked at each other with a smile. As Calyste read in the invalid's fine sea-green eyes a mixed expression of confusion, love, and amusement, he blushed and looked away.

"Did I not say to you, Calyste, that you men promised us happiness and ended by throwing us over a precipice?"

As he heard this little jest, spoken in a charming tone of voice, which betrayed some change in Beatrix's heart, Calyste knelt down, took one of her moist hands, which she allowed him to hold, and kissed it very submissively.

"You have every right to reject my love for ever," said he, penitently, "and I have no right ever to say a single word to you again."

"Ah!" cried Camille, as she saw the expression of her friend's face, and compared it with that she had seen after every effort of diplomacy; "love unaided will always have more wit than all the world beside. Take your draught, my dear, and go to sleep."

This evening spent by Calyste with Mademoiselle des Touches, who read books on mystical theology, while Calyste read "Indiana"—the first work of Camille's famous rival, in which he found the captivating picture of a young man who loved with idolatry and devotion, with mysterious rapture, and for his whole life—a book of fatal teaching for him! this evening left an ineffaceable mark on the heart of the unhappy youth, for Félicité at last convinced him that any woman who was not a monster could only be happy and flattered in every vanity, by knowing herself to be the object of a crime.

"You would never, never, have thrown me into the sea!" said poor Camille wiping away a tear.

Toward morning Calyste, quite worn out, fell asleep in his chair. It was now the Marquise's turn to look at the pretty boy, pale with agitation and his first love-watch; she heard him murmuring words in his sleep.

"He loves in his very dreams!" said she to Camille.

"We must send him home to bed," said Félicité, awaking him.

No one was alarmed at the du Guénics'; Mademoiselle des Touches had written a few words to the Baroness.

Calyste dined at les Touches next day. He found Beatrix up, pale, languid, and tired. But there was no hardness now in her speech or looks. After that evening, which Camille filled with music, seating herself at the piano to allow Calyste to hold and press Beatrix's hands while they could say nothing to each other, there was never a storm at les Touches. Félicité completely effaced herself.

Women like Madame de Rochefide, cold, fragile, hard, and thin—such women, whose throat shows a form of collar-bone suggestive of the feline race—have souls as pale and colorless as their pale gray or green eyes; to melt them, to vitrify these flints, a thunderbolt is needed. To Beatrix this thunderbolt had fallen in Calyste's rage of love and attempt on her life; it was such a flame as nothing can resist, changing the most stubborn nature. Beatrix felt herself softened; pure and true love flooded her soul with its soothing, lapping glow. She floated in a mild and tender atmosphere of feeling hitherto unknown, in which she felt ennobled, elevated; she had entered into the heaven where, in all ages, woman has dwelt, in Brittany. She enjoyed the respectful worship of this boy, whose happiness cost her so little; for a smile, a look, a word was enough for Calyste. Such value set by feeling on such trifles touched her extremely. To this angelic soul, the glove she had worn could be more than her whole body was to the man who ought to have adored her. What a contrast!

What woman could have resisted this persistent idolatry? She was sure of being understood and obeyed. If she had bid Calyste to risk his life for her smallest whim, he would not even have paused to think. And Beatrix acquired an indescribable air of imposing dignity; she looked at love on its loftiest side, and sought in it a footing, as it were, which

would enable her to remain, in Calyste's eyes, the supreme woman; she wished her power over him to be eternal. She coquetted all the more persistently because she felt herself weak.

For a whole week she played the invalid with engaging hypocrisy. How many times did she walk around and around the green lawn that spread on the garden side of the house, leaning on Calyste's arm, and reviving in Camille the torments she had caused her during the first week of her visit.

"Well, my dear, you are taking him the Grand Tour!" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the Marquise.

One evening, before the excursion to le Croisic, the two women had been discussing love, and laughing over the various ways in which men made their declarations, confessing that the most skillful, and, of course, therefore the least devoted, did not waste time in wandering through the mazes of sentimentality, and were right; so that those who loved best were, at a certain stage, the worst used.

"They set to work as La Fontaine did to get into the Academy," said Camille.

Her remark now recalled this conversation to Beatrix's memory while reproving her Machiavellian conduct. Madame de Rochefide had absolute power over Calyste, and could keep him within the bounds she chose, reminding him by a look or a gesture of his horrible violence by the seashore. Then the poor martyr's eyes would fill with tears; he was silent, swallowing down his arguments, his hopes, his griefs, with a heroism that would have touched any other woman.

Her infernal coquetting brought him to such desperation that he came one day to throw himself into Camille's arms and ask her advice. Beatrix, armed with Calyste's letter, had picked out the passage in which he said that loving was the chief happiness, that being loved was second to it, and she had made use of this axiom to suppress his passion to such a degree of respectful idolatry as she chose to permit. She

reveled in having her spirit soothed by the sweet concert of praise and adoration which nature suggests to youth; and there is so much art too, though unconscious, so much innocent seductiveness in their cries, their prayers, their exclamations, their appeals to themselves, in their readiness to mortgage the future, that Beatrix took care not to answer him. She had told him she doubted! Happiness was not yet in question, only the permission to love that the lad was constantly asking for, persistently bent on taking the citadel from the strongest side—that of the mind and heart.

The woman who is bravest in word is often weak in action. After seeing what progress he had made by his attempt to push Beatrix into the sea, it is strange that Calyste should not have continued the pursuit of happiness through violence; but love in these young lads is so ecstatic and religious that it insists on absolute conviction. Hence its sublimity.

However, one day Calyste, driven to bay by desire, complained vehemently to Camille of Madame de Rochefide's conduct.

"I wanted to cure you by enabling you to know her from the first," replied Mademoiselle des Touches, "but you spoilt all by your impetuosity. Ten days since you were her master; now you are her slave, my poor boy. So you would never be strong enough to carry out my orders."

"What must I do?"

"Quarrel with her on the ground of her cruelty. A woman is always carried away by talk; make her treat you badly, and do not return to les Touches till she sends for you."

There is a moment in every severe disease when the patient accepts the most painful remedies and submits to the most horrible operations. Calyste was at this crisis. He took Camille's advice: he stayed at home for two days; but on the third he was tapping at Beatrix's door and telling her that he and Camille were waiting breakfast for her.

"Another chance lost!" said Camille, seeing him sneak back so tamely.

During those two days Beatrix had stopped frequently at the window whence the Guérande road could be seen. When Camille found her there she said that she was studying the effect of the gorse by the roadside, its golden bloom blazing under the September sun. Thus Camille had read her friend's secret; she had only to say the word for Calyste to be happy. But she did not speak it; she was still too much a woman to urge him to the deed so dreaded by young hearts, who seem aware of all that their ideal must lose by it.

Beatrix kept Camille and Calyste waiting some little time; if he had been any other man, the delay would have seemed significant, for the Marquise's dress suggested her wish to fascinate Calyste and prevent his absenting himself again. After breakfast she went to walk in the garden, and enchanted him with joy, as she enchanted him with love, by expressing her wish to go with him again to see the spot where she had so nearly perished.

"Let us go alone," said Calyste in a broken voice.

"If I refused," said she, "I might give you reason to think that you were dangerous. Alas! as I have told you a thousand times, I belong to another, and must forever be his alone. I chose him, knowing nothing of love. The fault was twofold, and the punishment double."

When she spoke thus, her eyes moist with the rare tears such women can shed, Calyste felt a sort of pity that cooled his furious ardor; he worshiped her then as a Madonna. We must not expect that different natures should resemble each other in the expression of their feelings, any more than we look for the same fruits from different trees. Beatrix at this moment was torn in her mind; she hesitated between herself and Calyste; between the world, where she hoped some day to be seen again, and perfect happiness; between ruining herself finally by a second unpardonable passion and

social forgiveness. She was beginning to listen without even affected annoyance to the language of blind love; she allowed herself to be soothed by the gentle hands of pity. Already, many times, she had been moved to tears by hearing Calyste promising her love enough to make up for all she could lose in the eyes of the world, and pitying her for being bound to such an evil genius, to a man so false as Conti. More than once she had not silenced Calyste when she had told him of the misery and sufferings that overwhelmed her in Italy when she found that she did not reign alone in Conti's heart. Camille had given Calyste more than one lecture on this subject, and Calyste had profited by them.

"I," said he, "love you wholly; you will find in me none of the triumphs of art, nor the pleasures derived from seeing a crowd bewildered by the wonders of talent; my only talent is for loving you, my only joys will be in yours; no woman's admiration will seem to me worthy of consideration; you need fear no odious rivals. You are misprized; and wherever you are accepted I desire also to be accepted every day."

She listened to his words with a drooping head and downcast mien, allowing him to kiss her hands, and confessing to herself silently but very readily that she was, perhaps, a misunderstood angel.

"I am too much humiliated," she replied; "my past deprives me of all security for the future."

It was a great day for Calyste when, on reaching les Touches at seven in the morning, he saw from between two gorse bushes Beatrix at a window, wearing the same straw hat that she had worn on the day of their excursion. He felt quite dazzled. These small details of passion make the world wider.

Only Frenchwomen, perhaps, have the secret of these theatrical touches; they owe them to their graceful wit, of which

they infuse just so much into feeling as it can bear without losing its force.

Ah! how lightly she leaned on Calyste's arm. They went out together by the garden gate leading to the sand-hills. Beatrix thought their wildness pleasing; she saw the little rigid plants that grow there with their pink blossoms, and gathered several, with some of the Carthusian pinks, which also thrive on barren sands, and divided the flowers significantly with Calyste, to whom these blossoms and leaves were to have an eternally sinister association.

"We will add a sprig of box!" said she with a smile.

She stood for some time waiting for the boat on the jetty, where Calyste told her of his childish eagerness the day of her arrival.

"That expedition, which I heard of, was the cause of my severity that first day," said she.

Throughout their walk Madame de Rochefide talked in the half-jesting tone of a woman who loves, and with tenderness and freedom of manner. Calyste might believe himself loved. But when, as they went along the strand under the rocks, and down into one of those pretty bays where the waves have thrown up a marvelous mosaic of the strangest marbles, with which they played like children at picking up the finest specimens—when Calyste, at the height of intoxication, proposed in so many words that they should fly to Ireland, she assumed a dignified and mysterious air, begged to take his arm, and went on toward the cliff she had called her Tarpeian rock.

"My dear fellow," said she, as they slowly climbed the fine block of granite she meant to take as her pedestal, "I have not courage enough to conceal all you are to me. For the last ten years I have known no happiness to compare with that we have just enjoyed in hunting for shells among those tide-washed rocks, in exchanging pebbles, of which I shall have a necklace made, more precious in my eyes than if it were composed of the finest diamonds. I have been a child again, a

little girl, such as I was at thirteen or fourteen, when I was worthy of you. The love I have been so happy as to inspire you with has elevated me in my own eyes. Understand this in all its magical meaning. You have made me the proudest, the happiest of my sex, and you will live longer in my memory than I probably shall in yours."

At this moment she had reached the summit of the cliff, whence the vast ocean was seen spreading on one side, and on the other the Brittany coast with its golden islets, its feudal towers, and its clumps of gorse. Never had a woman a finer stage on which to make a grand avowal.

"But," she went on, "I am not my own; I am more firmly bound by my own act than I was by law. So you are punished for my misfortune; you must be content to know that we suffer together. Dante never saw Beatrice again, Petrarch never possessed his Laura. Such disasters befall none but great souls.

"Oh! if ever I should be deserted, if I should fall a thousand degrees lower in shame and infamy, if your Beatrix is cruelly misunderstood by a world that will be loathsome to her, if she should be the most despised of women! Then, beloved child," she added, taking his hand, "you will know that she is the foremost of them all, that she could rise to heaven with your support. But, then, my friend," she added, with a lofty glance at him, "when you want to throw her down, do not miss your stroke; after your love, death!"

Calyste had his arm around her waist; he clasped her to his heart. To confirm her tender words, Madame de Rochefide sealed Calyste's forehead with the most chaste and timid kiss. Then they went down the path and returned slowly, talking like two people who perfectly understand and enter into each other's minds; she believing she had secured peace, he no longer doubting that he was to be happy—and both deceived.

Calyste hoped from what Camille had observed that Conti

would be delighted to seize the opportunity of giving up Beatrix. The Marquise, on her part, abandoned herself to the uncertainty of things, waiting on chance. Calyste was too deeply in love and too ingenuous to create the chance. They both reached les Touches in the most delightful frame of mind, going in by the garden gate, of which Calyste had taken the key.

It was now about six o'clock. The intoxicating perfumes, the mild atmosphere, the golden tones of the evening light were all in harmony with their tender mood and talk. Their steps were matched and equal as those of lovers are; their movements betrayed the unison of their mind. Such silence reigned at les Touches that the sound of the opening and closing gate echoed distinctly, and must have been heard all over the grounds. As Calyste and Beatrix had said all they had to say, and their agitating walk had tired them, they came in slowly and without speaking.

Suddenly, as she turned an angle, Beatrix was seized with a spasm of horror—the infectious dread that is caused by the sight of a reptile, and that chilled Calyste before he saw its occasion. On a bench under a weeping ash Conti sat talking to Camille Maupin. Madame de Rochefide's convulsive internal trembling was more evident than she wished. Calyste now realized how dear he was to this woman who had just built the barrier between herself and him, no doubt with a view to securing a few days more for coquetting before overleaping it.

In one instant a tragical drama in endless perspective was felt in each heart.

"You did not expect me so soon, I dare say," said the artist, offering Beatrix his arm.

The Marquise could not avoid relinquishing Calyste's arm and taking Conti's. This undignified transition, so imperatively demanded, so full of offense to the later love, was too much for Calyste, who went to throw himself on the bench

by Camille, after exchanging the most distant greeting with his rival. He felt a hundred contending sensations. On discerning how much Beatrix loved him, his first impulse was to rush at the artist and declare that she was his; but the poor woman's moral convulsion, betraying her sufferings—for she had in that one moment paid the forfeit of all her sins—had startled him so much that he remained stupefied, stricken, like her, by relentless necessity. These antagonistic impulses produced the most violent storm of feeling he had yet known since he had loved Beatrix.

Madame de Rochefide and Conti went past the seat where Calyste had thrown himself by Camille's side, the Marquise looking at her rival with one of those terrible flashes by which a woman can convey everything. She avoided Calyste's eye, and seemed to listen to Conti, who was talking lightly.

"What can they be saying?" asked the agitated Calyste of Camille.

"Dear child, you have no idea yet of the terrible hold a man has over a woman on the strength of a dead passion. Beatrix could not refuse him her hand. He is laughing at her, no doubt, over her fresh love affair; he guessed it, of course, from your behavior and the way in which you came in together when he saw you."

"He is laughing at her!" cried the vehement youth.

"Keep calm," said Camille, "or you will lose the few chances that remain to you. If he wounds Beatrix too much in her vanities, she will trample him under foot like a worm. But he is astute; he will know how to do it cleverly. He will not suppose that the haughty Madame de Rochefide could possibly be false to him! It would be too base to love a young man for his beauty! He will no doubt speak of you to her as a mere boy bewitched by the notion of possessing a Marquise and of ruling the destinies of two women. Finally, he will thunder with the rattling artillery of insulting insinuations. Then Beatrix will be obliged to combat him with

false denials, of which he will take advantage and remain master of the field."

"Ah!" cried Calyste, "he does not love. I should leave her free. Love demands a choice renewed every minute, confirmed every day. The morrow is the justification of yesterday, and increases our hoard of joys. A few days later and he would not have found us here. What brought him back?"

"A journalist's taunt," said Camille. "The opera on whose success he had counted is a failure—a dead failure. These words spoken in the greenroom, perhaps by Claud Vignon, 'It is hard to lose your reputation and your mistress both at once!' stung him no doubt in all his vanities. Love based on mean sentiments is merciless.

"I questioned him; but who can trust so false and deceitful a nature? He seemed weary of poverty and of love, disgusted with life. He regretted having connected himself so publicly with the Marquise, and in speaking of their past happiness fell into a strain of poetic melancholy rather too elegant to be genuine. He hoped no doubt to extract the secret of your love from the joy his flattery must give me."

"Well?" said Calyste, looking at Beatrix and Conti returning, and listening no longer to Camille.

Camille had prudently kept on the defensive; she had not betrayed either Calyste's secret or Beatrix's. The artist was a man to dupe any one in the world, and Mademoiselle des Touches warned Calyste to be on his guard with him.

"My dear child," said she, "this is for you the most critical moment; such prudence and skill are needed as you have not, and you will be fooled by the most cunning man on earth; for I can do no more for you."

A bell announced that dinner was served. Conti offered his arm to Camille, Beatrix took that of Calyste. Camille let the Marquise lead the way; she had a moment to look at Calyste and enjoin prudence by putting her finger to her lips.

All through dinner Conti was in the highest spirits. This

was perhaps a way of gauging Madame de Rochefide, who played her part badly. As a coquette she might have deceived Conti; but, being seriously in love, she betrayed herself. The wily musician, far from watching her, seemed not to observe her embarrassment. At dessert he began talking of women and crying up their noble feelings.

"A woman who would desert us in prosperity will sacrifice everything to us in adversity," said he. "Women have the advantage of men in constancy; a woman must be deeply offended indeed to throw over a first lover; she clings to him as to her honor; a second love is a disgrace——" and so forth.

He was astoundingly moral; he burnt incense before the altar on which a heart was bleeding pierced by a thousand stabs. Only Camille and Beatrix understood the virulence of the acrid satire he poured out in the form of praises. Now and again they both colored, but they were obliged to control themselves; they went up to Camille's sitting-room arm in arm, and with one consent passed through the larger drawing-room, where there were no lights, and they could exchange a few words.

"I cannot endure to let Conti walk over my prostrate body, to give him a right over me," said Beatrix in an undertone. "The convict on the hulks is always at the mercy of the man he is chained to. I am lost! I must go back to the hulks of love! And it is you who have sent me back. Ah, you made him come a day too late—or too soon. I recognize your infernal gift of romance. Yes, the revenge is complete and the climax perfect."

"I could threaten you that I would write to Conti, but as to doing it! I am incapable of such a thing!" cried Camille. "You are miserable, so I forgive you."

"What will become of Calyste?" said the Marquise, with the exquisite artlessness of vanity.

"Then is Conti taking you away?" cried Camille.

"Ah! you expect to triumph?" retorted Beatrix.

The Marquise spoke the hideous words with rage, her beautiful features distorted, while Camille tried to conceal her gladness under an assumed expression of regret; but the light in her eyes gave the lie to the gravity of her face, and Beatrix could see through a mask! When they saw each other by candlelight, sitting on the divan where during the last three weeks so many comedies had been played out, where the secret tragedy of so many thwarted passions had had its beginning, the two women studied each other for the last time; they saw that they were divided by a deep gulf of hatred.

"I leave you Calyste," said Beatrix, seeing her rival's eyes. "But I am fixed in his heart, and no woman will oust me."

Camille retorted by quoting, in a tone of subtle irony which stung the Marquise to the quick, the famous speech of Mazarin's niece to Louis XIV.: "You reign, you love him, and you are going!"

Neither of them throughout this scene, which was a stormy one, noticed the absence of Calyste and Conti. The artist had remained at table with his rival, desiring him to keep him company and finish a bottle of champagne.

"We have something to say to each other," said Conti, to anticipate any refusal.

In the position in which they stood to each other, the young Breton was obliged to obey the behest.

"My dear boy," said the singer in a soothing voice when Calyste had drunk two glasses of wine, "we are a couple of good fellows; we may be frank with each other. I did not come here because I was suspicious. Beatrix loves me." And he assumed a fatuous air. "For my part, I love her no longer; I have come, not to carry her off, but to break with her and leave her the credit of the rupture. You are young; you do not know how necessary it is to seem the victim when you feel that you are the executioner. Young men spout fire and flame, they make a parade of throwing over a woman,

they often scorn her and make her hate them; but a wise man gets himself dismissed, and puts on a humiliated expression which leaves the lady some regrets and a sweet sense of superiority. The displeasure of the divinity is not irremediable, while abdication is past all reparation.

"You, happily for you, do not yet know how our lives may be hampered by the senseless promises which women are such fools as to accept, when gallantry requires us to tie such slip-knots to divert the idle hours of happiness. The pair then swear eternal fidelity. A man has some adventure with a woman—he does not fail to assure her politely that he hopes to live and die with her; he pretends to be impatiently awaiting the demise of a husband while earnestly wishing him perfect health. If the husband should die, there are women so provincial or so tenacious, so silly or so wily, as to rush on the man, crying, 'I am free— here I am!'

"Not one of us is free. The spent ball recoils and falls into the midst of our best-planned triumph or our greatest happiness.

"I foresaw that you would love Beatrix; I left her in a situation in which she must need flirt with you without abdicating her sacred majesty, were it only to annoy that angel, Camille Maupin. Well, my dear fellow, love her: you will be doing me a service. I only want her to behave atrociously to me. I dread her pride and her virtue. Perhaps, in spite of good-will on my side, some time will be required for this manœuvre. On such occasions the one who does not take the first step wins. Just now, as we walked around the lawn, I tried to tell her that I knew all, and wished her joy of her happiness. Well, she was very angry.

"I, at this moment, am in love with the youngest of our singers, Mademoiselle Falcon, of the opera, and I want to marry her. Yes, I have gotten so far as that! But when you come to Paris, you will say I have exchanged a marquise for a queen!"

Joy shed its glory on Calyste's candid face; he confessed his love; this was all that Conti wanted.

There is not a man in the world, however *blasé*, however depraved, whose love does not revive as soon as it is threatened by a rival. We may wish to be rid of a woman; we do not wish that she should throw us over. When lovers have come to this extremity, men and women alike try to be first in the field, so cruel is the wound to their self-respect. Perhaps what is at stake is all that society has thrown into that feeling; it is indeed less a matter of self-respect than of life itself, the whole future is in the balance; we feel as if we were losing not the interest, but the capital.

Calyste, cross-examined by the artist, related all that had happened during these three weeks at les Touches, and was delighted with Conti, who concealed his rage under a semblance of delightful good-nature.

"Let us go upstairs," said he. "Women are not trustful; they will not understand how we can have sat together for so long without clutching at each other's hair; they might come down to listen. I will do all I can for you, my dear child. I will be odious, rude, and jealous with the Marquise; I will constantly suspect her of deceiving me—there is nothing more certain to lead a woman to a betrayal; you will be happy, and I shall be free. You, this evening, must assume the part of a disconcerted lover; I shall play the suspicious and jealous man. Pity the angel for her inthrallment to a man without fine feelings—weep! You can weep, you are young. I, alas, can no longer weep; it is a great advantage lost."

Calyste and Conti went upstairs. The musician, requested to sing by his young rival, chose the greatest test known to musical executants, the famous "*Pria che spunti l'aurora*," which Rubini himself never attempts without a qualm, and in which Conti had often triumphed. Never had he been more wonderful than at this moment when so many feelings were seething in his breast. Calyste was in ecstasies. At the first

note of the cavatina the singer fired a glance at the Marquise which gave cruel significance to the words, and which was understood. Camille, playing the accompaniment, guessed that it was a command that made Beatrix bow her head. She looked at Calyste, and suspected that the boy had fallen into some snare in spite of her warnings. She was certain of it when the youth went gleefully to bid Beatrix good-night, kissing her hand and pressing it with a little knowing and confident look.

By the time Calyste had reached Guérande the ladies' maid and servants were packing Conti's traveling carriage; and "before the dawn," as he had sung, he had carried off Beatrix, with Camille's horses, as far as the first posting-house.

Under cover of the darkness, Madame de Rochefide was able to look back at Guérande, whose tower, white in the daybreak, stood out in the gray light. She gave herself up to melancholy—for she was leaving there one of the fairest flowers of life—love such as the purest girls may dream of. Respect of persons was crushing the only true love this woman had ever known, or could ever know, in all her life. The woman of the world was obeying the laws of the world, sacrificing love to appearances, as some women sacrifice it to religion or to duty. From this point of view, this terrible story is that of many women.

Next day, at about noon, Calyste arrived at les Touches. When he reached the turn in the road whence, yesterday, he had seen Beatrix at the window, he caught sight of Camille, who hurried out to meet him. At the bottom of the stairs she said this cruel word—

"Gone!"

"Beatrix?" cried Calyste, stunned.

"You were duped by Conti. You told me nothing; I could do nothing."

She led the poor boy to her little drawing-room; he sank on the divan, in the place where he had so often seen the

Marquise, and melted into tears. Félicité said nothing; she smoked her hookah, knowing that nothing can stem the first rush of such suffering, which is always deaf and speechless. Calyste, since there was nothing to be done, stayed there all day in a state of utter torpor. Just before dinner, Camille tried to say a few words to him, after begging that he would listen to her.

"My dear boy," said she, "you have been the cause to me of intense suffering, and I have not, as you have, a fair future life in which to recover. To me the earth has no further springtime, the soul no further love. So I, to find comfort, must look higher.

"Here, the day before Beatrix came, I painted her portrait; I would not darken it, you would have thought that I was jealous. Now, listen to the truth. Madame de Rochefide is as far as possible from being worthy of you. The display of her fall was not necessary, but she would have been nobody but for that scandal; she made it on purpose to have a part to play. She is one of those women who prefer the parade of wrongdoing to the calm peace of happiness; they affront society to wring from it the evil gift of a slander; they must be talked about, at whatever cost. She was eaten up by vanity. Her fortune and wit had not availed to give her the feminine dominion which she had tried to conquer by presiding over a salon; she had fancied that she could achieve the celebrity of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; but the world is just, it bestows the honors of its interest only on genuine passion.

"Her flight was not justified by any obstacles. Damocles' sword did not hang glittering over her festivities; and beside, in Paris, those who love truly and sincerely may easily be happy in a quiet way. In short, if she could be tender and loving, she would not have gone off last night with Conti."

Camille talked for a long time, and very eloquently, but this last effort was in vain; she ceased on seeing a shrug, by

which Calyste conveyed his entire belief in Beatrix, and she insisted on his coming down and sitting with her at dinner, for he found it impossible to eat.

It is only while we are very young that these spasmodic symptoms occur. At a later period the organs have formed habits, and are, as it were, hardened. The reaction of the moral system on the physical is never strong enough to induce mortal illness unless the constitution preserves its original delicacy. A man can resist a violent grief which kills a youth, less because his feelings are not so strong than because his organs are stronger. Mademoiselle des Touches was indeed alarmed from the first by Calyste's calm and resigned attitude after the first flood of tears. Before leaving the house, he begged to see Beatrix's room once more, and hid his face in the pillow on which hers had rested.

"This is folly!" said he, shaking hands with Camille and leaving her, sunk in melancholy.

He returned home, found the usual party engaged in playing *mouche*, and sat by his mother all the evening. The curé, the Chevalier du Halga, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël all knew of Madame de Rochefide's departure, and were all glad. Calyste would now come back to them, and they all watched, almost by stealth, seeing that he was silent. Nobody in that old house could conceive of all that this death of a first love must be to a heart so true and artless as Calyste's.

For some days Calyste went regularly to les Touches; he would wander round the grass-plot where he had sometimes walked arm in arm with Beatrix. He often went as far as le Croisic, and climbed the rock whence he had tried to throw her into the sea; he would sit for hours leaning on the box-shrub, for by examining the projections on the riven rock he had learned to climb up and down the face of it. His solitary expeditions, his silence, and his lack of appetite at last made his mother uneasy. At the end of a fortnight, while these

proceedings lasted—a good deal like those of an animal in its cage, and the despairing lover's cage was, to adopt La Fontaine's phrase, "the spots honored by the footstep, illuminated by the eyes" of Beatrix—Calyste could no longer cross the little inlet; he had only strength enough to drag himself as far on the Guérande road as the spot whence he had seen Beatrix at the window.

The family, glad at the departing of "the Parisians," to use the provincial phrase, discerned nothing ominous or sickly in Calyste. The two old maids and the curé, following up their plan, had kept Charlotte de Kergarouët, who, in the evening, made eyes at Calyste, and got nothing in return but advice as to her game of *mouche*. All through the evening Calyste would sit between his mother and his provincial fiancée, under the eye of the curé and of Charlotte's aunt, who, on their way home, would comment on his greater or less dejection. They took the unhappy boy's indifference for acquiescence in their plans.

One evening, when Calyste, being tired, had gone early to bed, the players all left their cards on the table and looked at each other as the young man shut his bedroom door. They had listened anxiously to his footsteps.

"Something ails Calyste," said the Baroness, wiping her eyes.

"There is nothing the matter with him," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; "we must get him married as soon as may be."

"Do you think that will divert him?" said the chevalier.

Charlotte looked sternly at Monsieur du Halga, whom she thought in very bad taste this evening, immoral, depraved, irreligious, and quite ridiculous with his dog, in spite of her aunt, who always took the old sailor's part.

"To-morrow morning I will lecture Calyste," said the old Baron, whom they had thought asleep; "I do not want to go out of this world without having seen my grandson, a little

pink-and-white du Guénic, with a Breton hood on, in his cradle."

"He never speaks a word," said old Zéphirine; "no one knows what ails him; he never ate less in his life; what does he live on? If he eats at les Touches, the devil's cookery does him no good."

"He is in love," said the chevalier, proffering this opinion with extreme timidity.

"Now, then, old dotard, you have not put into the pool," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. "When you are thinking of your young days, you forget everything else."

"Come to breakfast with us to-morrow morning," said old Zéphirine to Charlotte and Jacqueline; "my brother will talk to his son, and we will settle everything. One nail drives out another."

"Not in a Breton," said the chevalier.

The next morning Calyste saw Charlotte arrive, dressed with unusual care, though it was still early, just as his father had ended giving him, in the dining-room, a discourse on matrimony, to which the lad could find nothing to say. He knew how ignorant his aunt, his father, and his mother were, and all their friends; he was gathering the fruits of knowledge; he found himself isolated, no longer speaking the language of the household. So he only begged a few days' respite, and his father rubbed his hands with joy and gave new life to the Baroness by whispering the good news in her ear.

Breakfast was a cheerful meal. Charlotte, to whom the Baron had given a wink, was in high spirits. A rumor filtered through Gasselin, by which all the town knew that the du Guénics and the Kergarouëts had come to an understanding. After breakfast Calyste went out of the hall by the steps on the garden-side, and was followed by Charlotte; he offered her his arm, and led her to the arbor at the bottom of the garden. The old folk, standing at the window, looked at them with a sort of pathos. Charlotte looked back at the

pretty house, somewhat uneasy at her companion's silence, and took advantage of their presence to begin the conversation by saying to Calyste, "They are watching us!"

"They cannot hear us," he replied.

"No, but they can see us."

"Let us sit down," said Calyste gently, as he took her hand.

"Is it true that your banner once floated from that twisted pillar?" asked Charlotte, looking at the house as if it were her own. "It would look well there! How happy one might be here! You will make some alterations in the arrangement of your house, will you not, Calyste?"

"I shall have no time for it, my dear Charlotte," said the young man, taking her hands and kissing them. "I will tell you my secret. I love a woman whom you have seen, and who loves me—love her too well to make any other woman happy; and I know that from our infancy you and I have always been intended to marry."

"But she is married, Calyste," said Charlotte.

"I will wait," said the boy.

"And so will I," said Charlotte, her eyes full of tears. "You cannot love that woman for long; she has gone off with a singer, they say——"

"Marry some one else, my dear Charlotte," said Calyste. "With such a fortune as your aunt has to leave you, which is enormous in Brittany, you can find a better match than I. You will find a man with a title. I have not brought you out here to tell you what you already know, but to entreat you in the name of our long friendship to take the matter upon yourself and to refuse me. Say that you can have nothing to say to a man whose heart is not free, and my passion will at least have been so far serviceable that I shall have done you no wrong. You cannot think how life weighs upon me! I cannot endure any struggle, I am as weak as a body deserted by its soul, by the very element of life. But for the grief that

my death would be to my mother and my aunt, I should have thrown myself into the sea ere now, and I have never gone to the rocks of le Croisic since the day when the temptation began to be irresistible. Say nothing of this. Charlotte, farewell."

He took the girl's head in his hands, kissed her hair, went out by the path under the gable, and made his escape to Camille's, where he remained till midnight.

On returning at about one in the morning he found his mother busy with her tapestry, waiting for him. He crept in softly, took her hand, and asked—

"Is Charlotte gone?"

"She is going to-morrow with her aunt; they are both in despair. Come to Ireland, my Calyste," she added, caressing him.

"How many times have I dreamed of flying thither!" said he.

"Really!" exclaimed the Baroness.

"With Beatrix," he added.

Some days after Charlotte's departure, Calyste was walking with the Chevalier du Halga on the mall, and he sat down in the sun on a bench whence his eye could command the whole landscape, from the weathercocks of les Touches to the shoals marked out by the foaming breakers which dance above the reefs at high-tide. Calyste was thin and pale, his strength was diminishing, he was beginning to have little periodical shivering fits, symptomatic of fever. His eyes, with dark marks round them, had the hard glitter which a fixed idea will give to lonely persons, or which the ardor of the struggle imparts to the bold leaders of the civilization of our age. The chevalier was the only person with whom he sometimes exchanged his ideas; he had discerned in this old man an apostle of his religion, and found in him the traces of a never-dying love.

"Have you loved many women in your life?" he asked,

the second time that he and the old navy man sailed in company, as the captain called it, up and down the mall.

"Only one," said the captain.

"Was she free?"

"No," said the chevalier. "Ah, I suffered much! She was my best friend's wife—my patron's, my chief's; but we loved each other so much!"

"She loved you, then?"

"Passionately," replied du Halga with unwonted vehemence.

"And you were happy?"

"Till her death. She died at the age of forty-nine, an émigrée at Saint-Petersburg; the climate killed her. She must be very cold in her coffin! I have often thought of going to bring her away and lay her in our beloved Brittany, near me! But she rests in my heart?"

The chevalier wiped his eyes; Calyste took his hands and pressed them.

"I cling to that dog more than to my life," said he, pointing to Thisbe. "That little creature is in every particular exactly like the dog she used to fondle with her beautiful hands, and to take on her knees. I never look at Thisbe without seeing Madame de Kergarouët's hands."

"Have you seen Madame de Rochefide?" asked Calyste.

"No," replied du Halga. "It is fifty-eight years now since I looked at a woman, excepting your mother; there is something in her coloring that is like the admiral's wife."

Three days later the chevalier said to Calyste as they met on the mall—

"My boy, all I have in the world is a hundred and eighty louis. When you know where to find Madame de Rochefide, come and ask me for them, to go to see her."

Calyste thanked the old man, whose life he envied. But day by day he became more morose; he seemed to care for no one; he was gentle and kind only to his mother. The

Baroness watched the progress of this mania with increasing anxiety; she alone, by much entreaty, could persuade Calyste to take some nourishment.

By the beginning of October the young fellow could no longer walk on the mall with the chevalier, who came in vain to ask him out with an old man's attempts at coaxing.

"We will talk about Madame de Rochefide," said he. "I will tell you the history of my first adventure. Your son is very ill," said he to the Baroness, on the day when his urgency proved useless.

Calyste replied to all who questioned him that he was perfectly well, and, like all melancholy youths, relished the notion of death; but he never left the house now; he sat in the garden on the seat, warming himself in the pale, mild autumn sunshine, alone with his thoughts, and avoiding all company.

After the day when Calyste no longer went to call on her, Félicité begged the curé of Guérande to go to see her. The Abbé Grimont's regularity in going to les Touches almost every morning, and dining there from time to time, became the news of the moment; it was talked of in all the neighborhood, and even at Nantes. However, he never missed spending the evening at Guérande, where despair reigned. Masters and servants, all were grieved by Calyste's obstinacy, though they did not think him in any danger. It never occurred to any one of these good people that the poor youth could die of love. The chevalier had no record of such a death in all his travels or reminiscences. Everybody ascribed Calyste's emaciation to want of nutrition. His mother would go on her knees to beseech him to eat. To please her, Calyste tried to overcome his repugnance, and the food thus taken against his will added to the low fever that was consuming the handsome boy.

At the end of October the beloved son no longer went up to

his room on the second floor; he had his bed brought down into the sitting-room, and lay there generally, in the midst of the family, who at last sent for the Guérande doctor.

The medical man tried to check the fever by quinine, and for a few days it yielded to the treatment. The doctor also ordered Calyste to take exercise and to amuse himself. The Baron rallied his strength and shook off his torpor; he grew young as his son grew old. He took out Calyste, Gasselin, and the two fine sporting dogs. Calyste obeyed his father, and for a few days the three men went out together; they went through the forest and visited their friends in neighboring châteaux; but Calyste had no spirit, no one could beguile him of a smile, his pale, rigid face revealed a perfectly passive creature.

The Baron, broken by fatigue, fell into a state of collapse and was forced to come home, bringing Calyste with him in the same condition. Within a few days both father and son were so ill that, at the request of the Guérande doctor himself, the two first physicians of Nantes were called in. The Baron had been quite knocked over by the visible alteration in Calyste. With the terrible prescience that nature bestows on the dying, he trembled like a child at the thought that his family would be extinct; he said nothing, he only clasped his hands, praying as he sat in his chair, to which he was tied by weakness. He sat facing the bed occupied by Calyste, and watched him constantly. At his child's slightest movement he was greatly agitated, as if the flame of his life were fluttered by it.

The Baroness never left the room, and old Zéphirine sat knitting by the fire in a state of agonizing anxiety. She was constantly being asked for wood, for the father and son both felt the cold, and her stores were invaded. She had made up her mind to give up her keys, for she was no longer brisk enough to go with Mariotte; but she insisted on knowing everything; every minute she questioned Mariotte or her sis-

ter-in-law, and would take them aside to hear about the state of her brother and nephew.

One evening, when Calyste and his father were dozing, old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël remarked that they would no doubt have to resign themselves to losing the Baron, whose face was quite white, and had assumed a waxen look. Mademoiselle du Guénic dropped her knitting, fumbled in her pocket, and pulled out an old rosary of black wooden beads, which she proceeded to tell with a fervency that gave such a glory of energy to her ancient parched features that the other old maid followed her example; and then, at a sign from the curé, they all united in the silent exaltation of the old blind lady.

"I was the first to pray to God," said the Baroness, remembering the fateful letter written by Calyste, "but He did not hear me!"

"Perhaps," said the Abbé Grimont, "we should be wise to beg Mademoiselle des Touches to come to see Calyste."

"She!" cried old Zéphirine, "the author of all our woes, she who lured him away from his family, who tore him from us, who made him read impious books, who taught him the language of heresy! Curse her, and may God never forgive her! She has crushed the du Guénics!"

"She may perhaps raise them up again," said the curé in a mild voice. "She is a saintly and virtuous woman: I am her warranty. She has none but good intentions as regards Calyste. May she be able to realize them!"

"Give me notice the day she is to set foot here, and I will go out," cried the old lady. "She has killed both father and son. Do you suppose I cannot hear how weak Calyste's voice is!—he hardly has strength to speak."

Just then the three physicians came in. They wearied Calyste with questions. As to his father, their examination was brief; they knew all in a moment; the only wonder was that he still lived. The Guérande doctor quietly explained

to the Baroness that it would probably be necessary to take Calyste to Paris to consult the most eminent authorities, for that it would cost more than a hundred louis to bring them to Guérande.

"A man must die of something, but love is nothing," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Alas, whatever the cause may be, Calyste is dying," said his mother. "I recognize every symptom of consumption, the most horrible malady of my native land."

"Calyste is dying?" said the Baron, opening his eyes, whence trickled two large tears which, caught in the many furrows of his face, slowly fell to the bottom of his cheeks—the only tears, no doubt, that he had ever shed in his life.

He dragged himself on to his feet, shuffled to his son's bed, took his hands, and looked at him.

"What do you want, father?" said the boy.

"I want you to live!" cried the Baron.

"I cannot live without Beatrix," said Calyste to the old man, who sank back into his chair.

"Where can I find a hundred louis to fetch the doctors from Paris?" cried the Baroness. "We have yet time."

"A hundred louis!" exclaimed Zéphirine. "Will they save him?"

Without waiting for her sister-in-law's reply, the old woman put her hands into her pocket-holes and untied an under petticoat, which fell with a heavy sound. She knew so well where she had sewn in her louis that she ripped them out with a rapidity that seemed magical. The gold-pieces rang as they dropped one by one. Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël looked on with stupefied amazement.

"They can see you!" she whispered, as a warning, in her friend's ear.

"Thirty-seven," said Zéphirine, counting the gold.

"Every one will know how much you have."

"Forty-two."

"Double louis, and all new! how did you get them, you who cannot see them?"

"I could feel them. Here are a hundred and four louis," cried Zéphirine. "Is that enough?"

"What are you doing?" asked the Chevalier du Halga, coming in, and unable to imagine what was the meaning of the old lady's holding out her lap full of louis d'or.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël explained the case in two words.

"I had heard of it," said he, "and I came to bring you a hundred and forty louis I had kept at Calyste's service, as he knows."

The chevalier took out of his pocket two rolls of coin, which he showed them. Mariotte, seeing all these riches, bid Gasselin lock the door.

"Gold will not restore him to health," said the Baroness, in tears.

"But it may enable him to run after his Marquise," said du Halga. "Come, Calyste!"

Calyste sat up in bed, and exclaimed gleefully—

"Let us be off!"

"Then he will live," said the Baron, in a stricken voice, "and I may die. Go and fetch the curé."

These words struck them all with terror. Calyste, seeing his father turn ghastly pale from the painful agitation of this scene, could not restrain his tears. The curé, who knew the decision the doctors had come to, had gone off to fetch Mademoiselle des Touches; for at this moment he displayed as much admiration for her as he had not long since felt repugnance, and could defend her as a pastor defends one of the favorites of his flock.

On hearing of the Baron's desperate extremity, a crowd gathered in the little street; the peasants, the marshmen, and the townsfolk all kneeling in the courtyard, while the priest administered the last sacrament to the old Breton warrior. Everybody was deeply touched to think of the father dying

by the bed of his sick son. The extinction of the old family was regarded as a public calamity.

The ceremony struck Calyste; for a while his grief silenced his passion. All through the death-struggles of this heroic defender of the monarchy he remained on his knees, watching the approach of death, and weeping.

The old man died in his chair, in the presence of the assembled family.

"I die faithful to the King and religion. Great God, as the reward of my efforts, let Calyste live!" he said.

"I will live, father, and obey you," replied the young man.

"If you would make my death as easy as Fanny has made my life, swear that you will marry."

"I promise it, father."

It was touching to see Calyste, or rather his ghost, leaning on the old chevalier, a spectre leading a shade, following the Baron's bier as chief mourner. The church and the little square before the porch were full of people, who had come from ten leagues round.

The Baroness and Zéphirine were deeply grieved when they saw that, in spite of his efforts to obey his father, Calyste was still sunk in an ominous stupor. On the first day of their mourning the Baroness led her son to the seat at the bottom of the garden, and questioned him. Calyste replied with gentle submissiveness, but his answers were heartbreaking.

"Mother," said he, "there is no life left in me; what I eat does not nourish me, the air I breathe into my lungs does not renew my blood; the sun seems cold to me, and when it shines for you on the front of the house as at this moment, where you see carvings bathed in light I see dim forms wrapped in mist. If Beatrix were here, all would be bright once more. There is but one thing in the world that has her color and form—this flower and these leaves," and he drew

out of his bosom the withered blossoms that the Marquise had given him.

The Baroness dared ask him no more; the madness betrayed by his replies seemed worse than the sorrow of his silence.

But Calyste was thrilled as he caught sight of Mademoiselle des Touches through the windows at opposite ends of the room. Félicité reminded him of Beatrix. Thus it was to her that the two women owed the one gleam of joy that lightened their griefs.

"Well, Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, when she saw him, "the carriage is ready; we will go together and find Beatrix. Come."

The pale, thin face of the boy, all in black, was brightened by a flush, and a smile dawned on his features.

"We will save him!" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the mother, who wrung her hand, shedding tears of joy.

A week after the Baron's death, Mademoiselle des Touches, the Baronne du Guénic, and Calyste set out for Paris, leaving the business matters in the hands of old mademoiselle.

Félicité's affection for Calyste had planned a brilliant future for the poor boy. She was connected with the Grandlieus, and the ducal branch was ending in a family of five daughters. She had written to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, telling her the whole story of Calyste, and announcing her intention of selling her house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, for which a company of speculators had offered two million five hundred thousand francs. Her business manager had already bought for her one of the finest houses in the Rue de Bourbon, at a cost of seven hundred thousand francs. Out of the surplus money from the sale of the house in the Rue Mont-Blanc she meant to devote one million to repurchasing the estates of the du Guénics, and would leave the rest of her fortune among the five de Grandlieu girls.

Félicité knew the plans made by the Duke and Duchess, who intended that their youngest daughter should marry the Vicomte de Grandlieu, the heir to their titles; Clotilde-Frédérique, the second, meant, she knew, to remain unmarried, without taking the veil, however, as her eldest sister had done; so the only one to be disposed of was Sabine, a pretty creature just twenty years of age, on whom she counted to cure Calyste of his passion for Madame de Rochefide.

During their journey Félicité told Madame du Guénic of all these plans. The house in the Rue de Bourbon was now being furnished, and in it Calyste was to live if these schemes should succeed.

They all three went straight to the Hôtel Grandlieu, where the Baroness was received with all the respect due to her name as a girl and as a wife. Mademoiselle des Touches, of course, advised Calyste to see all he could of Paris while she made inquiries as to where Beatrix might be, and she left him to the fascinations of every kind which awaited him there. The Duchess, her daughters, and their friends did the honors of the capital for Calyste just at the season when it was beginning to be gayest.

The bustle of Paris entirely diverted the young Breton's mind. He fancied there was some likeness in the minds of Madame de Rochefide and Sabine de Grandlieu, who at that time was certainly one of the loveliest and most charming girls in Paris society, and he thenceforward paid an amount of attention to her advances which no other woman would have won from him. Sabine de Grandlieu played her part all the more successfully because she liked Calyste.

Matters were so skillfully managed that, in the course of the winter of 1837, the young Baron, who had recovered his color and youthful beauty, could listen without disgust when his mother reminded him of his promise to his dying father, and spoke of his marrying Sabine de Grandlieu. Still, while keeping his promise, he concealed an indifference which the

Baroness could discern, while she hoped it might be dispelled by the satisfactions of a happy home.

On the day when the Grandlieu family and the Baroness, supported on this occasion by her relations from England, held a sitting in the large drawing-room of the Duke's house, while Leopold Hannequin, the family notary, explained the conditions of the marriage-contract before reading it through, Calyste, whose brow was clouded, as all could see, refused point-blank to accept the benefactions offered to him by Mademoiselle des Touches. He still trusted to Félicité's devotion and believed that she was seeking Beatrix.

At this moment, in the midst of the dismay of both families, Sabine came in, dressed so as to remind Calyste of the Marquise de Rochefide, though her complexion was dark, and she placed in Calyste's hand the following letter:

Camille to Calyste.

"Calyste, before retiring into my cell as a novice, I may be allowed to glance back at the world I am quitting to enter the world of prayer. This glance is solely for you, who in these later days have been all the world to me. My voice will reach you, if I have calculated exactly, in the middle of a ceremony which I could not possibly witness. On the day when you stand before the altar, to give your hand to a young and lovely girl who is free to love before heaven and the world, I shall be in a religious house at Nantes—before the altar too, but plighted for ever to Him who can never deceive nor disappoint.

"I write, not to sadden you, but to beseech you not to allow any false delicacy to hinder the good I have always wished to do you since our first meeting. Do not deny the right I have so hardly earned. If love is suffering, then I have loved you well, Calyste; but you need feel no remorse. The only pleasures I have known in my life I owe to you, and

the pain has come from myself. Compensate me for all this past suffering by giving me one eternal joy. Let me, dear, be in some sort a perfume in the flowers of your life, and mingle with it always without being importunate. I shall certainly owe to you my happiness in life eternal; will you not let me pay my debt by the offering of some transient and perishable possessions? You will not fail in generosity? You will not regard this as the last subterfuge of scorned love?

"Calyste, the world was nothing to me without you; you made it a fearful desert, and you have led the infidel Camille Maupin, the writer of books and dramas, which I shall solemnly disown—you have led that audacious and perverted woman, tied hand and foot, to the throne of God. I am now, what I ought always to have been, an innocent child. Yes, I have washed my robes in the tears of repentance, and I may go to the altar presented by an angel—by my dearly loved Calyste! How sweet it is to call you so—now that my resolution has sanctified the word. I love you without self-interest, as a mother loves her son, as the church loves her children. I can pray for you and yours without the infusion of a single desire but that for your happiness.

"If you knew the supreme peace in which I live after having lifted myself by thought above the petty interests of the world, and how exquisite is the feeling of having done one's duty, in accordance with your noble motto, you would enter on your happy life with a firm step, nor glance behind nor around you. So I am writing to beseech you to be true to yourself and to your family.

"My dear, the society in which you must live cannot exist without the religion of duty; and you will misunderstand life, as I have misunderstood it, if you give yourself up to passion and to fancy as I have done. Woman can only be equal with man by making her life a perpetual sacrifice, as man's must be perpetual action. Now my life has been, as it were, one long

outbreak of egoism. God, perhaps, brought you in its evening to my door, as a messenger charged with my punishment and pardon. Remember this confession from a woman to whom fame was a pharos whose light showed her the right way. Be great! sacrifice your fancy to your duties as the head of a house, as husband and father. Raise the downtrodden banner of the old du Guénics; show the present age, when principles and religion are denied, what a gentleman may be in all his glory and distinction.

"Dear child of my soul, let me play the mother a little: the angelic Fanny will not be jealous of a woman dead to the world, of whom you will henceforth know nothing but that her hands are always raised to heaven. In these days the nobility need fortune more than ever, so accept a part of mine, dear Calyste, and make a good use of it. It is not a gift; it is trust-money. I am thinking more of your children and your old Breton estate than of yourself when I offer you the interest which time has accumulated for me on my Paris property."

"I am ready to sign," said the young Baron, to the great delight of the assembly.

PART III.

RETROSPECTIVE ADULTERY.

The week after this, when the marriage service had been celebrated at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, at seven in the morning, as was the custom in some families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—Calyste and Sabine got into a neat traveling-carriage in the midst of the embracing, congratulations, and tears of a score of persons gathered in groups under the awning of the Hôtel de Grandlieu. The congratulations were offered by the witnesses and the men; the tears were to be seen in the eyes of the Duchesse de Grandlieu and her daughter Clotilde—both tremulous, and from the same reflection.

"Poor Sabine! she is starting in life at the mercy of a man who is married not altogether willingly."

Marriage does not consist solely of pleasures, which are as fugitive under those conditions as under any others; it involves a consonance of tempers and physical sympathies, a concord of character, which make this social necessity an ever-new problem. Girls to be married know the conditions and dangers of this lottery fully as well as their mothers do; this is why women shed tears as they look on at a marriage, while men smile; the men think they risk nothing; the women know pretty well how much they risk.

In another carriage, which had started first, was the Baronne du Guénic, to whom the Duchess had said at parting—

"You are a mother though you have only a son. Try to fill my place to my darling Sabine."

On the box of that carriage sat a groom, serving as a courier, and behind it two ladies'-maids. The four postillions, in splendid liveries—each carriage having four horses—all had nosegays in their button-holes and favors in their hats. The

Duc de Grandlieu, even by paying them, had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to remove the ribbons. The French postillion is eminently intelligent, but he loves his joke; and these took the money and replaced the favors outside the city walls.

"Well, well, good-by, Sabine!" said the Duchess. "Remember your promise, and write often. Calyste, I say no more, but you understand me."

Clotilde, leaning on the arm of her youngest sister Athénaïs, who was smiling at the Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu, gave the bride a keen glance through her tears and watched the carriage till it disappeared amid the repeated salvoes of four postillions' whips, noisier than pistol-shots. In a very short time the gay procession reached the Esplanade of the Invalides, followed the quay to the Pont d'Iéna, the Passy Gate, the Versailles avenue, and, finally, the high-road to Brittany.

Is it not strange, to say the least, that the artisan class of Switzerland and Germany, and the greatest families of France and England, obey the same custom, and start on a journey after the nuptial ceremony? The rich pack themselves into a box on wheels. The poor walk gayly along the roads, resting in the woods, feeding at every inn, so long as their glee, or rather their money, holds out. A moralist would find it difficult to decide which is the finest flower of modesty—that which hides from the public eye, inaugurating the domestic hearth and bed as the worthy citizen does, or that which flies from the family and displays itself in the fierce light of the high-road to the eyes of strangers? Refined natures must crave for solitude, and avoid the world and the family alike. The rush of love that begins a marriage is a diamond, a pearl, a gem cut by the highest of all arts, a treasure to be buried deep in the heart.

Who could tell the tale of a honeymoon except the bride? And how many women would here admit that this period of uncertain duration—sometimes of only a single night—is the

preface to married life? Sabine's first three letters to her mother betrayed a state of things which, unfortunately, will not seem new to some young wives, nor to many old women. All who have become sick-nurses, so to speak, to a man's heart have not found it out so quickly as Sabine did. But the girls of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, when they are keen-witted, are women already in mind. Before marriage they have received the baptism of fine manners from the world and from their mothers. Duchesses, anxious to perpetuate the tradition, are often unaware of all the bearings of their lessons when they say to their daughters—"No one ever does that." "Do not laugh at such things." "You must never fling yourself on a sofa, you must sit down quietly." "Never do such a thing again." "It is most incorrect, my dear!" and so forth.

And critical middle-class folk refuse to recognize any innocence or virtue in young creatures who, like Sabine, are virgin souls, but perfected by cleverness, by the habits of good style, and good taste, knowing from the age of sixteen how to use an opera-glass. Sabine, to lend herself to Mademoiselle des Touches' schemes for her marriage, could not but be of the school of Mademoiselle de Chaulieu. This innate mother-wit, these gifts of birth, may perhaps make this young wife as interesting as the heroine of the "Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariées" (Letters of Two Brides), in which we see the vanity of such social advantages in the great crises of married life, where they are often crushed under the double weight of unhappiness and passion.

I.

To Madame la Duchesse de Grandlieu.

GUÉRANDE, *April*, 1838.

"DEAR MOTHER:—You can easily understand why I did not write to you on the journey; one's mind turns like the

wheels. So here I have been these two days in the depths of Brittany, at the Hôtel du Guénic, a house carved all over like a cocoanut-box. Notwithstanding the affectionate attentions of Calyste's family, I feel an eager longing to fly away to you and tell you a thousand things which I feel can only be told to a mother.

"Dear mamma, Calyste married me cherishing a great sorsow in his soul; we all of us knew it, and you did not disguise the difficulties of my position; but, alas! they are greater than you imagined. Oh, dear mamma, how much experience we may acquire in a few days—why should I not say to you in a few hours? All your counsels proved useless, and you will understand why by this simple fact: I love Calyste as if he were not my husband. That is to say, if I were married to another man and were traveling with Calyste, I should love him and hate my husband. Consider him, then, as a man loved entirely, involuntarily, absolutely, and as many more adverbs as you choose to supply. So, in spite of your warnings, my slavery is an established fact.

"You advised me to keep myself lofty, haughty, dignified, and proud, in order to bring Calyste to a state of feeling which should never undergo any change throughout life; in the esteem and respect which must sanctify the wife in the home and family. You spoke warmly, and with reason, no doubt, against the young women of the day who, under the excuse of living on good terms with their husbands, begin by being docile, obliging, submissive, with a familiarity, a free-and-easiness which are, in your opinion, rather too *cheap*—a word I own to not understanding yet, but we shall see by-and-by—and which, if you are right, are only the early and rapid stages toward indifference and, perhaps, contempt.

"'Remember that you are a Grandlieu,' you said in my ear.

"This advice, full of the maternal eloquence of Dedalus, has shared the fate of mythological things. Dear, darling

mother, could you believe that I should begin by the catastrophe which, according to you, closes the honeymoon of the young wives of our day?

"When Calyste and I were alone in the carriage, each thought the other as silly as himself, as we both perceived the importance of the first word, the first look; and each, bewildered by the marriage sacrament, sat looking out of a window. It was so preposterous that, as we got near the city gate, monsieur made me a little speech in a rather broken voice—a speech prepared, no doubt, like all extempore efforts, to which I listened with a beating heart, and which I take the liberty of epitomizing for your benefit.

"'My dear Sabine,' said he, 'I wish you to be happy, and, above all, to be happy in your own way,' he added. 'In our position, instead of deceiving each other as to our characters and sentiments, by magnanimous concessions, let us both be now what we should be a few years hence. Regard me as being your brother, as I would wish to find a sister in you.'

"Though this was most delicately meant, I did not find in this first speech of married love anything answering to the eagerness of my soul, and, after replying that I felt quite as he did, I remained pensive. After this declaration of rights to be equally cold, we talked of the weather, the dust, the houses, and the scenery with the most gracious politeness, I laughing a rather forced laugh, he lost in dreams.

"Finally, as we left Versailles, I asked Calyste point-blank —calling him 'my dear Calyste,' as he called me 'my dear Sabine'—if he could tell me the history of the events which had brought him to death's door, and to which I owed the honor of being his wife. He hesitated for a long time. In fact, it was the subject of a little discussion lasting through three stages; I trying to play the part of a willful girl determined to sulk; he debating with himself on the ominous question asked as a challenge to Charles X. by the public press: 'Will the King give in?' At last, when we had left

Verneuil, and after swearing often enough to satisfy three dynasties that I would never remind him of his folly, never treat him coldly, and so on, he painted his passion for Madame de Rochefide: 'I do not wish,' he said, in conclusion, 'that there should be any secrets between us.'

"Poor dear Calyste did not know, I suppose, that his friend Mademoiselle des Touches and you had been obliged to tell me all; for a girl cannot be dressed as I was on the day of the contract without being taught her part.

"I cannot but tell everything to so good a mother as you are. Well, then, I was deeply hurt at seeing that he had yielded far less to my request than to his own wish to talk about the unknown object of his passion. Will you blame me, dearest mother, for having wanted to know the extent of this sorrow, of the aching wound in his heart of which you had told me?

"Thus, within eight hours of having been blessed by the curé of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, your Sabine found herself in the rather false position of a young wife hearing from her husband's own lips his confidences as to a cheated passion and the misdeeds of a rival. Yes, I was playing a part in the drama of a young wife, officially informed that she owed her marriage to the disdain of an old beauty!

"By this narrative I gained what I sought. 'What?' you will ask. Oh, my dear mother! on clocks and chimney carvings I have often enough seen Loves leading each other on, hand in hand, to put the lesson into practice! Calyste ended the romance of his memories with the most vehement protestations that he had entirely gotten over what he called his madness. Every protest needs a signature. The happy hapless one took my hand, pressed it to his lips, and then held it for a long time. A declaration followed. This one seemed to me more suitable than the first to our position as man and wife, though our lips did not utter a single word. This happiness I owed to my spirited indignation against the bad taste

of a woman so stupid as not to love my handsome and delightful Calyste.

"I am called away to play a game of cards, which I have not yet mastered. I will continue my letter to-morrow. That I should have to leave you just now to make the fifth at a game of *mouche!* Such a thing is impossible anywhere but in the depths of Brittany.

"*May.*

"I resume the tale of my Odyssey. By the third day your children had dropped the ceremonial *vous* (you) and adopted the loverlike *tu* (thou). My mother-in-law, delighted to see us happy, tried to fill your place, dearest mother; and, as is always the case with those who take a part with the idea of effacing past impressions, she is so delightful that she has been almost as much to me as you could be. She, no doubt, guessed how heroic my conduct was; at the beginning of our journey she hid her anxiety too carefully not to betray it by her excessive precautions.

"When I caught sight of the towers of Guérande I said in your son-in-law's ear, 'Have you quite forgotten her?'

"And my husband, now my angel, had perhaps never known the depth of an artless and genuine affection, for that little speech made him almost crazy with joy.

"Unluckily my desire to make him forget Madame de Rochefide led me too far. How could I help it! I love him, and I am almost Portuguese, for I am like you rather than my father. Calyste accepted everything, as spoilt children do; he is above everything an only son. Between you and me, I will never let my daughter—if I ever should have a daughter—marry an only son. It is quite enough to have to manage one tyrant, and in an only son there are several. And so we exchanged parts; I played the devoted wife. There are dangers in self-devotion to gain an end; it is loss of dignity. So I have to announce the wreck in me of that semi-virtue;

dignity is really no more than a screen set up by pride, behind which we may fume at our ease. How could I help myself, mamma; you were not here, and I looked into a gulf. If I had maintained my dignity, I should have known the chill pangs of a sort of brotherliness, which would certainly have become simple indifference. And what future would have lain before me?

"As a result of my devotion, I am Calyste's slave. Shall I get out of that position? We shall see; for the present I like it. I love Calyste—I love him entirely with the frenzy of a mother who thinks everything right that her son can do, even when he punishes her a little.

"*May* 15.

"So far, dear mother, marriage has come to me in a most attractive form. I lavish all my tenderest affection on the handsomest of men, who was thrown over by a fool for the sake of a wretched singer—for the woman is evidently a fool, and a fool in cold blood, the worst sort of fool. I am charitable in my lawful passion, and heal his scars while inflicting eternal wounds on myself. Yes, for the more I love Calyste, the more I feel that I should die of grief if anything put an end to our present happiness. And I am worshiped, too, by all the family, and by the little company that meets at the Hôtel du Guénic, all of them born figures in some ancient tapestry, and having stepped out of it to show that the impossible can exist. One day when I am alone I will describe them to you—Aunt Zéphirine, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, the Chevalier du Halga, the Demoiselles de Kergarouët, and the rest, down to the two servants, whom I shall be allowed, I hope, to take to Paris—Mariotte and Gasselin, who regard me as an angel alighted on earth from heaven, and who are still startled when I speak to them—they are all figures to put under glass shades.

"My mother-in-law solemnly installed us in the rooms she

and her deceased husband had formerly inhabited. The scene was a touching one. 'I lived all my married life here,' said she, 'quite happy. May that be a happy omen for you, my dear children!' And she has taken Calyste's room. The saintly woman seemed to wish to divest herself of her memories and her admirable life as a wife to endow us with them.

"The Province of Brittany, this town, this family with its antique manners—the whole thing, in spite of the absurdities, which are invisible to any but a mocking Parisian woman, has something indescribably grandiose, even in its details, to be expressed only by the word sacred. The tenants of the vast estates of the du Guénics, repurchased, as you know, by Mademoiselle des Touches—whom we are to visit in the convent—all came out to receive us. These good folk in their holiday dresses, expressing the greatest joy at greeting Calyste as really their master once more, made me understand what Brittany is, and feudality, and old France. It was a festival I will not write about; I will tell you when we meet. The terms of all the leases have been proposed by the tenants themselves, and we are to sign after the tour of inspection we are to make round *our* lands that have been pledged this century and a half. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël tells us that these yeomen have assessed the returns with an accuracy that Paris folk would not believe in. We are to start three days hence and ride everywhere.

"On my return I will write again, dear mother; but what can I have to say to you, since my happiness is already complete? So I must write what you know already, namely, how much I love you."

II.

From the same to the same.

"NANTES, *June.*

"After playing the part of the Lady of the Castle, worshiped by her vassals as though the revolutions of 1830 and 1789 had never torn down our banners; after riding through woods, halting at farms, dining at old tables spread with cloths a century old, and groaning under Homeric dishes served in antediluvian plate; after drinking delicious wine out of goblets like those we see in the hands of conjurers; after salvoes fired at dessert, and deafening shouts of 'Vive les du Guénics!' and balls, where the orchestra is a bagpipe, which a man blows at for ten hours on end! and such bouquets! and brides who insist on having our blessing! and healthy fatigue, cured by such sleep as I had never known, and a delicious waking to love as radiant as the sun that shines above us, twinkling on a myriad insects that hum in genuine Bretagne! Finally, after a grotesque visit to the Castle of du Guénic, where the windows are open gates, and the cows might pasture on the grass grown in the halls; but we have vowed to restore it, and furnish it, so as to come here every year and be hailed by the vassals of the clan, one of whom carried our banner. Ouf! here I am at Nantes.

"What a day we had when we went to le Guénic! The priest and all the clergy came out to meet us, all crowned with flowers, mother, and blessed us with such joy! The tears come into my eyes as I write about it. And my lordly Calyste played his part as a liege like a figure of Walter Scott's. Monsieur received homage as if we had stepped back into the thirteenth century. I heard girls and women saying, 'What a handsome master we have!' just like the chorus of a comic opera.

"The old folk discussed Calyste's likeness to the du

Guénics whom they had known. Oh! Brittany is a noble and sublime country, a land of faith and religion. But progress has an eye on it; bridges and roads are to be made, ideas will invade it, and farewell to the sublime. The peasants will certainly cease to be as free and proud as I saw them when it has been proved to them that they are Calyste's equals, if, indeed, they can be brought to believe it.

"So after the poetry of this pacific restoration, when we had signed the leases we left that delightful country, flowery and smiling, gloomy and barren by turns, and we came here to kneel before her, to whom we owe our good fortune, and give her thanks. Calyste and I both felt the need to thank the novice of the visitation. In memory of her he will bear on his shield quarterly the arms of des Touches: *party per pale engrailed or and vert.* He will assume one of the silver eagles as a supporter, and place in its beak the pretty womanly motto, '*Souvièġne-vous.*' So we went yesterday to the Convent of the Ladies of the Visitation, conducted by the Abbé Grimont, a friend of the Guénic family; he told us that your beloved Félicité, dear mamma, is a saint; indeed, she can be no less to him, since this illustrious conversion has led to his being made vicar-general of the diocese. Mademoiselle des Touches would not see Calyste; she received me alone. I found her a little altered, paler and thinner; she seemed extremely pleased by my visit.

"'Tell Calyste,' said she in a low voice, 'that my not seeing him is a matter of conscience and self-discipline, for I have permission; but I would rather not purchase the happiness of a few minutes with months of suffering! Oh, if you could only know how difficult I find it to answer when I am asked, "What are you thinking about?" The mistress of the novices can never understand the vastness and multiplicity of the ideas which rush through my brain like a whirlwind. Sometimes I see Italy once more, or Paris, with all their display, always with Calyste, who,' she said with the poetic turn

you know so well, 'is the sun of my memory. I was too old to be admitted to the Carmelites, so I chose the order of Saint Francis de Sales, solely because he said, "I will have you bareheaded instead of barefoot!" disapproving of such austerities as only mortify the body. In fact, the head is the sinner. The holy bishop did well to make his rule stern to the brain and merciless to the will! This was what I needed, for my mind is the real culprit; it deceived me as to my heart till the age of forty, when, though we are sometimes for a moment forty times happier than younger women, we are sometimes fifty times more wretched. Well, my child, and are you happy?' she ended by asking me, evidently glad to say no more about herself.

"'You see me in a rapture of love and happiness,' I told her.

"'Calyste is as kind and genuine as he is noble and handsome,' she said gravely. 'You are my heiress; you have, beside my fortune, the twofold ideal of which I dreamed. I am glad of what I have done,' she added after a pause. 'Now, my child, do not be blinded. You have easily grasped happiness, you had only to put out your hand; now try to keep it. If you had come here merely to carry away the advice of my experience, your journey would be well rewarded. Calyste at this moment is fired by an infection of passion; you did not inspire it. To make your happiness durable, dear child, strive to add this element to the former one. In your own interest and your husband's, try to be capricious, coy, a little severe if necessary. I do not advise a spirit of odious calculation, nor tyranny, but the science of conduct. Between usury and extravagance there is economy. Learn to acquire a certain decent control of your husband.

"'These are the last worldly words I shall ever speak; I have been waiting to say them to you, for my conscience quaked at the notion of having sacrificed you to save Calyste; attach him to you, give him children, let him respect you as

their mother. Finally,' she added in an agitated voice, 'manage that he shall never see Beatrix again!'

"This name was enough to produce a sort of torpor in us both; we remained looking into each other's eyes, exchanging our vague sentiments of uneasiness.

"'Are you going home to Guérande?' she asked.

"'Yes,' said I.

"'Well, never go to les Touches. I was wrong to give you the place.'

"'Why?'

"'Child, les Touches is for you a Bluebeard's cupboard, for there is nothing so dangerous as again rousing a sleeping passion.'

"I have given you the substance of our conversation, my dear mother. If Mademoiselle des Touches made me talk, on the other hand she gave me much to think about—all the more because in the excitement of our travels, and my happiness with my Calyste, I had forgotten the serious matter of which I spoke in my first letter.

"After admiring Nantes, a delightful and splendid city; after going to see, in the Place de Bretagne, the spot where Charette so nobly fell, we arranged to return to Saint-Nazaire down the Loire, since we had already gone from Nantes to Guérande by the road. Public traveling is an invention of the modern monster the Monopole. Two rather pretty women belonging to Nantes were behaving rather noisily on deck, suffering evidently from Kergarouëtism—a jest you will understand when I shall have told you what the Kergarouëts are. Calyste behaved very well. Like a true gentleman, he did not parade me as his wife. Though pleased by his good taste, like a child with his first drum, I thought this an admirable opportunity for practicing the system recommended by Camille Maupin—for it was certainly not the novice that had spoken to me. I put on a little sulky face, and Calyste was very flatteringly distressed. In reply to his question, whis-

pered in my ear, 'What is the matter?' I answered the truth—

"'Nothing whatever.'

"And I could judge at once how little effect the truth has in the first instance. Falsehood is a decisive weapon in cases where rapidity is the only salvation for a woman or an empire. Calyste became very urgent, very anxious. I led him to the forepart of the boat, among a mass of ropes, and there, in a voice full of alarms, if not of tears, I told him all the woes and fears of a woman whose husband happens to be the handsomest of men.

"'Oh, Calyste!' said I, 'there is one dreadful blot on our marriage. You did not love me; you did not choose me! You did not stand fixed like a statue when you saw me for the first time. My heart, my attachment, my tenderness cry out to you for affection, and some day you will punish me for having been the first to offer the treasure of my pure and involuntary girlish love! I ought to be grudging and capricious, but I have no strength for it against you. If that odious woman who scorned you had been in my place now, you would not even have seen those two hideous provincial creatures who would be classed with cattle by the Paris *octroi*.'*

"Calyste, my dear mother, had tears in his eyes, and turned away to hide them; he saw la Basse Indre, and ran to desire the captain to put us on shore. No one can hold out against such a response, especially as it was followed by a stay of three hours in a little country inn, where we breakfasted off fresh fish, in a little room such as *genre* painters love, while through the windows came the roar of the ironworks of Indret across the broad waters of the Loire. Seeing the happy result of the experiments of experience, I exclaimed, 'Oh, sweet Félicité!'

"Calyste, who of course knew nothing of the advice I had received, or of the artfulness of my behavior, fell into a de-

* Tax-collectors at the city gates.

lightful punning blunder by replying, 'Never let us forget it! We will send an artist here to sketch the scene.'

"I laughed, dear mamma!—well, I laughed until Calyste was quite disconcerted and on the point of being angry.

"'Yes,' said I, 'but there is in my heart a picture of this landscape, of this scene, which nothing can ever efface, and inimitable in its color.'

"Indeed, mother, I find it impossible to give my love the appearance of a warfare or hostility. Calyste can do what he likes with me. That tear is, I believe, the first he ever bestowed on me; is it not worth more than a second declaration of a wife's rights? A heartless woman, after the scene on the boat, would have been mistress of the situation; I lost all I had gained. By your system, the more I am a wife, the more I become a sort of harlot, for I am a coward in happiness; I cannot hold out against a glance from my lord. I do not abandon myself to love; I hug it as a mother clasps her child to her breast for fear of some harm."

III.

From the same to the same.

"*July*, GUÉRANDE.

"Oh! my dear mother, to be jealous after three months of married life! My heart is indeed full. I feel the deepest hatred and the deepest love. I am worse than deserted, I am not loved! Happy am I to have a mother, another heart to which I may cry at my ease.

"To us wives who are still to some extent girls, it is quite enough to be told—'Here, among the keys of your palace, is one all rusty with remembrance; go where you will, enjoy everything, but beware of visiting les Touches'—to make us rush in hot-foot, our eyes full of Eve's curiosity. What a provoking element Mademoiselle des Touches had infused

into my love! And why was I forbidden les Touches? What! does such happiness as mine hang on an excursion, on a visit to an old house in Brittany? What have I to fear? In short, add to Mrs. Bluebeard's reasons the craving that gnaws at every woman's heart to know whether her power is precarious or durable, and you will understand why one day I asked, with an air of indifference—

"'What sort of place is les Touches?'

"'Les Touches is your own,' said my adorable mother-in-law.

"'Ah! If only Calyste had never set his foot there!——' said Aunt Zéphirine, shaking her head.

"'He would not now be my husband,' said I.

"'Then you know what happened there?' thus my mother-in-law, sharply.

"'It is a place of perdition,' said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. 'Mademoiselle des Touches committed many sins there, for which she now begs forgiveness of God.'

"'And has it not saved that noble creature's soul, beside making the fortune of the convent?' cried the Chevalier du Halga. 'The Abbé Grimont tells me that she has given a hundred thousand francs to the Ladies of the Visitation.'

"'Would you like to go to les Touches?' said the Baroness. 'It is worth seeing.'

"'No, no!' cried I, eagerly.

"Now, does not this little scene strike you as taken from some diabolical drama? And it was repeated under a hundred pretenses. At last my mother-in-law said—

"'I understand why you should not wish to go to les Touches. You are quite right.'

"Confess, dear mamma, that such a stab, so unintentionally given, would have made you determine that you must know whether your happiness really rested on so frail a basis that it must perish under one particular roof? I must do this justice to Calyste, he had never proposed to visit this retreat which

is now his property. Certainly when we love, we become bereft of our senses, for his silence and reserve nettled me, till I said one day, 'What are you afraid of seeing at les Touches that you never mention it even?'

"'Let us go there,' said he.

"I was caught, as every woman is who wishes to be caught, and who trusts to chance to cut the Gordian knot of her hesitancy. So we went to les Touches.

"It is a delightful spot, most artistically tasteful, and I revel in the abyss whither Mademoiselle des Touches had warned me never to go. All poison-flowers are beautiful. The devil sows them—for there are flowers of Satan's and flowers from God! We have only to look into our own hearts to see that they went halves in the work of creation. What bitter-sweet joys I found in this place where I played, not with fire, but with ashes. I watched Calyste; I wanted to know if every spark was dead, and looked out for every chance draught of air, believe me! I noted his face as we went from room to room, from one piece of furniture to another, exactly like children seeking some hidden object. He seemed thoughtful; still, at first, I fancied I had conquered. I felt brave enough to speak of Madame de Rochefide, who, since the adventure of her fall at le Croisic, is called Roche-perfide. Finally, we went to look at the famous box-shrub on which Beatrix was caught when Calyste pushed her into the sea that she might never belong to any man.

"'She must be very light to have rested there!' said I, laughing.

"Calyste said nothing. 'Peace to the dead,' I added.

"Still he was silent. 'Have I vexed you?' I asked.

"'No. But do not galvanize that passion,' he replied.

"What a speech! Calyste, seeing it had saddened me, was doubly kind and tender to me.

"August.

"Alas! I was at the bottom of the pit and amusing myself, like the innocents in a melodrama, with plucking the flowers. Suddenly a horrible idea came galloping across my happiness like the horse in the German ballad. I fancied I could discern that Calyste's love was fed by his reminiscences, that he was wreaking on me the storms I could revive in him, by reminding him of that horrible coquette Beatrix. That unwholesome, cold, limp, tenacious nature—akin to the mollusc and the coral insect—dares to be called Beatrix!

"So already, dear mother, I am forced to have an eye on a suspicion when my heart is wholly Calyste's, and is it not a terrible misfortune that the eye should get the better of the heart; that the suspicion, in short, has been justified? And in this way—

"'I love this place,' I said to Calyste one morning, 'for I owe my happiness to it—so I forgive you for sometimes mistaking me for another woman——'

"My loyal Breton colored, and I threw my arms round his neck; but I came away from les Touches, and shall never go back there.

"The depth of my hatred, which makes me long for the death of Madame de Rochefide—oh dear, a natural death, of course, from a cold, or some accident—revealed to me the extent and vehemence of my love for Calyste. This woman has haunted my slumbers; I have seen her in my dreams. Am I fated to meet her? Yes, the novice in the convent was right; les Touches is a fatal spot. Calyste renewed his impressions there, and they are stronger than the pleasures of our love.

"Find out, my dear mother, whether Madame de Rochefide is in Paris; for, if so, I shall remain on our estates in Brittany. Poor Mademoiselle des Touches, who is now sorry that she dressed me like Beatrix on the day when our marriage-contract was signed, to carry out her scheme—if she could now know

how completely I am a substitute for our odious rival! What would she say? Why, it is prostitution! I am no longer myself! I am put to shame. I am suffering from a mad desire to flee from Guérande and the sands of le Croisic.

"*August* 25.

"I am quite resolved to return to the ruins of le Guénic. Calyste, troubled at seeing me so uneasy, is taking me thither. Either he does not know much of the world or he guesses nothing; or, if he knows the reason of my flight, he does not love me. I am so afraid of discovering the hideous certainty if I seek it, that, like the children, I cover my eyes with my hands not to hear the explosion. Oh, mother! I am not loved with such love as I feel in my own heart. Calyste, to be sure, is charming; but what man short of a monster would not be, like Calyste, amiable and gracious, when he is given all the opening blossoms of the soul of a girl of twenty, brought up by you, pure as I am, and loving, and—as many women have told you—very pretty——"

"Le Guénic, *September* 18*th*.

"Has he forgotten her? This is the one thought which echoes like remorse in my soul. Dear mother, has every wife, like me, some such memory to contend with? Pure girls ought to marry none but innocent youths! And yet that is an illusory Utopia; and it is better to have a rival in the past than in the future. Pity me, mamma, though at this moment I am happy; happy as a woman is who fears to lose her happiness and clings to it!—a way of killing it sometimes, says wise Clotilde.

"I perceive that for the last five months I have thought only of myself; that is, of Calyste. Tell my sister Clotilde that the dicta of her melancholy wisdom recur to me sometimes. She is happy in being faithful to the dead; she need fear no rival.

"A kiss to my dear Athénaïs; I see that Juste is madly in love with her. From what you say in your last letter, all he fears is that he may not win her. Cultivate that fear as a precious flower. Athénaïs will be mistress; I, who dreaded lest I should not win Calyste from himself, shall be the handmaid. A thousand loves, dearest mother. Indeed, if my fears should not prove vain, I shall have paid very dear for Camille Maupin's fortune. Affectionate respects to my father."

These letters fully explain the secret attitude of this husband and wife. Where Sabine saw a love-match, Calyste saw a *mariage de convenance.* And the joys of the honeymoon had not altogether fulfilled the requirements of the law as to community of goods.

During their stay in Brittany the work of restoring, arranging, and decorating the Hôtel du Guénic in Paris had been carried on by the famous architect Grindot, under the eye of Clotilde and the Duchesse and Duc de Grandlieu. Every step was taken to enable the young couple to return to Paris in December, 1838; and Sabine was glad to settle in the Rue de Bourbon, less for the pleasure of being mistress of the house than to discover what her family thought of her married life. Calyste, handsome and indifferent, readily allowed himself to be guided in matters of fashion by Clotilde and his mother-in-law, who were gratified by his docility. He filled the place in the world to which his name, his fortune, and his connection entitled him. His wife's success, regarded as she was as one of the most charming women of the year, the amusements of the best society, duties to be done, and the dissipations of a Paris season, somewhat recruited the happiness of the young couple by supplying excitement and interludes. The Duchesse and Clotilde believed in Sabine's happiness, ascribing Calyste's cold manners to his English blood, and the young wife got over her gloomy

notions; she heard herself envied by so many less happy wives, that she banished her terrors to the limbo of bad dreams. Finally, Sabine's prospect of motherhood was the crowning guarantee for the future of this neutral-tinted union, a good augury on which women of experience rely.

In October, 1839, the young Baronne du Guénic had a son, and was so foolish as to nurse him herself, like almost every woman under similar circumstances. How can she help being wholly a mother when her child is the child of a husband so truly idolized? Thus by the end of the following summer Sabine was preparing to wean her first child.

In the course of a two years' residence in Paris, Calyste had entirely shed the innocence which had cast the light of its prestige on his first experience in the world of passion. Calyste, as the comrade of the young Duc de Maufrigneuse—like himself, lately married to an heiress, Berthe de Cinq-Cygne—of the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, of the Duc and Duchesse de Rhétoré, the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and all the company that met in his mother-in-law's drawing-room, learned to see the differences that divide provincial from Paris life. Wealth has its dark hours, its tracts of idleness, for which Paris, better than any other capital, can provide amusement, diversion, and interest. Hence, under the influence of these young husbands, who would leave the noblest and most beautiful creatures for the delights of the cigar or of whist, for the sublime conversation at a club or the absorbing interests of the turf, many of the domestic virtues were undermined in the young Breton husband. The maternal instinct in a woman who cannot endure to bore her husband is always ready to support young married men in their dissipations. A woman is so proud of seeing the man she leaves perfectly free come back to her side.

One evening, in October this year, to escape the cries of a weaned child, Calyste—on whose brow Sabine could not bear to see a cloud—was advised by her to go to the Théâtre des

Variétés, where a new piece was being acted. The servant sent to secure a stall had taken one quite near to the stage-boxes. Between the first and second acts, Calyste, looking about him, saw in one of these boxes on the ground tier, not four yards away, Madame de Rochefide.

Beatrix in Paris! Beatrix in public! The two ideas pierced Calyste's brain like two arrows. He could see her again after nearly three years! Who can describe the commotion in the soul of this lover who, far from forgetting, had sometimes so completely identified Beatrix with his wife that Sabine had been conscious of it? Who can understand how this poem of a lost and misprized love, ever living in the heart of Sabine's husband, overshadowed the young wife's dutiful charms and ineffable tenderness? Beatrix became light, the day-star, excitement, life, the unknown; while Sabine was duty, darkness, the familiar! In that instant one was pleasure, the other satiety. It was a thunderbolt.

Sabine's husband in a loyal impulse felt a noble prompting to leave the house. As he went out from the stalls, the door of the box was open, and in spite of himself his feet carried him in. He found Beatrix between two very distinguished men, Canalis and Nathan—a politician and a literary celebrity. During nearly three years, since Calyste had last seen Madame de Rochefide, she had altered very much; but though the metamorphosis had changed the woman's nature, she seemed all the more poetical and attractive in Calyste's eyes. Up to the age of thirty, clothing is all a pretty Parisian demands of dress; but when she has crossed the threshold of the thirties, she looks to finery for armor, fascinations, and embellishment; she composes it to lend her graces; she finds a purpose in it, assumes a character, makes herself young again, studies the smallest accessories—in short, abandons nature for art.

Madame de Rochefide had just gone through the changing scenes of the drama which, in this history of the manners of

the French in the nineteenth century, is called "The Deserted Woman." Conti having thrown her over, she had naturally become a great artist in dress, in flirtation, and in artificial bloom of every description.

"How is it that Conti is not here?" asked Calyste of Canalis in a whisper, after the commonplace greetings which begin the most momentous meeting when it takes place in public.

The erewhile poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, twice minister, and now for the fourth time a speaker hoping for fresh promotion, laid his finger with meaning on his lips. This explained all.

"I am so glad to see you," said Beatrix, in a kittenish way. "I said to myself as soon as I saw you, before you saw me, that you, at any rate, would not disown me! Oh, my Calyste!" she murmured in his ear, "why are you married? —and to such a little fool, too!"

As soon as a woman whispers to a new-comer in her box, and makes him sit down by her, men of breeding always find some excuse for leaving them together.

"Are you coming, Nathan?" said Canalis; "Madame la Marquise will excuse me if I go to speak a word to d'Arthez, whom I see with the Princesse de Cadignan. I must talk about a combination of speakers for to-morrow's sitting."

This retreat, effected with good taste, gave Calyste a chance of recovering from the shock he had sustained; but he lost all his remaining strength and presence of mind as he inhaled the, to him, intoxicating and poisonous fragrance of the poem called Beatrix.

Madame de Rochefide, who had grown bony and stringy, whose complexion was almost ruined, thin, faded, with dark circles around her eyes, had that evening wreathed the untimely ruin with the most ingenious devices of Parisian frippery. Like all deserted women, she had tried to give herself a virgin grace, and by the effect of various white draperies to

recall the maidens of Ossian, with names ending in *a*, so poetically represented by Girodet. Her fair hair fell about her long face in bunches of curls, reflecting the flare of the footlights in the sheen of scented oil. Her pale forehead shone; she had applied an imperceptible touch of rouge over the dull whiteness of her skin, bathed in bran-water, and its brilliancy cheated the eye. A scarf, so fine that it was hard to believe that man could have woven it of silk, was wound about her neck so as to diminish its length by hiding it, and barely revealing the treasures enticingly displayed by her stays. The bodice was a masterpiece of art. As to her attitude, it is enough to say that it was well worth the pains she had taken to elaborate it. Her arms, lean and hard, were scarcely visible through the carefully arranged puffs of her wide sleeves. She presented that mixture of false glitter and sheeny silk, of flowing gauze and frizzled hair, of liveliness, coolness, and movement which has been called *je ne sais quoi.** Every one knows what is meant by this *je ne sais quoi.* It is a compound of cleverness, taste, and temperament. Beatrix was, in fact, a drama, a *spectacle*, all scenery, and transformations, and marvelous machinery.

The performance of these fairy pieces, which are no less brilliant in dialogue, turns the head of a man blessed with honesty; for, by the law of contrast, he feels a frenzied desire to play with the artificial thing. It is false and seductive, elaborate, but pleasing, and there are men who adore these women who play at being charming as one plays a game of cards. This is the reason—man's desire is a syllogism, and argues from this external skill to the secret theorems of voluptuous enjoyment. The mind concludes, though not in words, "A woman who can make herself so attractive must have other resources of passion." And it is true. The women who are deserted are the women who love; the women who keep their lovers are those know how to love. Now, though

* I know not what.

this lesson in Italian had been a hard one for Beatrix's vanity, her nature was too thoroughly artificial not to profit by it.

"It is not a matter of loving you men," she had been saying some minutes before Calyste went in; "we have to worry you when we have got you; that is the secret of keeping you. Dragons who guard treasures are armed with talons and wings!"

"Your idea might be put into a sonnet," Canalis was saying just as Calyste entered the box.

At one glance Beatrix read Calyste's condition; she saw, still fresh and raw, the marks of the collar she had put on him at les Touches. Calyste, offended by her phrase about his wife, hesitated between his dignity as a husband, defending Sabine, and finding a sharp word to cast on the heart whence, for him, arose such fragrant reminiscences—a heart he believed to be yet bleeding. The Marquise discerned this hesitancy; she had spoken thus solely to gauge the extent of her power over Calyste, and, seeing him so weak, she came to his assistance to get him out of his difficulty.

"Well, my friend," said she, when the two courtiers had left, "you see me alone—yes, alone in the world!"

"And you never thought of me?" said Calyste.

"You?" she replied; "are you not married? It has been one of my great griefs among the many I have endured since we last met. 'Not merely have I lost love,' I said to myself, 'but friendship, too, a friendship I believed to be wholly Breton.' We get used to anything. I now suffer less, but I am broken. This is the first time for a long while that I have unburdened my heart. Compelled to be reserved in the presence of indifferent persons, and as arrogant to those who court me as though I had never fallen, and having lost my dear Félicité, I have no ear into which to breathe the words, 'I am wretched!' And even now, can I tell you what my anguish was when I saw you a few yards away from me, not recognizing me; or what my joy is at seeing you close to me?

Yes," said she, at a movement on Calyste's part, "it is almost fidelity! In this you see what misfortune means! A nothing, a visit, is everything.

"Yes, you really loved me, as I deserved to be loved by the man who has chosen to trample on all the treasures I cast at his feet. And, alas! to my woe, I cannot forget; I love, and I mean to be true to the past, which can never return."

As she poured out this speech, a hundred times rehearsed, she used her eyes in such a way as to double the effect of words which seemed to surge up from her soul with the violence of a long-restrained torrent. Calyste, instead of speaking, let fall the tears that had been gathering in his eyes. Beatrix took his hand and pressed it, making him turn pale.

"Thank you, Calyste; thank you, my poor boy; that is the way a true friend should respond to a friend's sorrow. We understand each other. There, do not add another word! Go now; if we were seen, you might cause your wife grief if by chance any one told her that we had met—though innocently enough, in the face of a thousand people. Good-by, I am brave, you see——" And she wiped her eyes by what should be called in feminine rhetoric the antithesis of action.

"Leave me to laugh the laugh of the damned with the people I do not care for, but who amuse me," she went on. "I see artists and writers, the circle that I knew at our poor Camille's—she was right, no doubt! Enrich the man you love, and then disappear, saying, 'I am too old for him!' It is to die a martyr. And that is best when one cannot die a virgin."

She laughed, as if to efface the melancholy impression she might have made on her adorer.

"But where can I call on you?" asked Calyste.

"I have hidden myself in the Rue de Courcelles, close to the Parc Monceaux, in a tiny house suited to my fortune, and I cram my brain with literature—but for my own satisfaction only, to amuse myself. Heaven preserve me from the mania

of writing! Go, leave me; I do not want to be talked about, and what will not people say if they see us together? And, beside, Calyste, I tell you, if you stay a minute longer I shall cry, for I can't help it."

Calyste withdrew, after giving his hand to Beatrix, and feeling a second time the deep strange sensation of a pressure on both sides full of suggestive incitement.

"My God! Sabine never stirred my heart like this," was the thought that assailed him in the corridor.

Throughout the rest of the evening the Marquise de Rochefide did not look three times straight at Calyste; but she sent him side-glances which rent the soul of the man who had given himself up wholly to his first and rejected love.

When the Baron du Guénic was at home again, the magnificence of his rooms reminded him of the sort of mediocrity to which Beatrix had alluded, and he felt a hatred for the fortune that did not belong to that fallen angel. On hearing that Sabine had been in bed some time, he was happy in having a night to himself to live in his emotions.

He now cursed the perspicacity given to Sabine by her affection. When it happens that a man is adored by his wife, she can read his face like a book, she knows the slightest quiver of his muscles, she divines the reason when he is calm, she questions herself when he is in the least sad, wondering if she is in fault, she watches his eyes; to her those eyes are colored by his ruling thought—they love or they love not. Calyste knew himself to be the object of a worship so complete, so artless, so jealous, that he doubted whether he could assume a countenance that would preserve the secret of the change that had come over him.

"What shall I do to-morrow morning?" said he to himself as he fell asleep, fearing Sabine's scrutiny.

For when they first met, or even in the course of the day, Sabine would ask him, "Do you love me as much as ever?" or, "I don't bore you?" Gracious questionings, varying

according to the wife's wit or mood, and covering real or imaginary terrors.

A storm will stir up mud and bring it to the top of the noblest and purest hearts. And so, next morning, Calyste, who was genuinely fond of his child, felt a thrill of joy at hearing that Sabine was anxious as to the cause of some symptoms, and, fearing croup, could not leave the infant Calyste. The Baron excused himself on the score of business from breakfasting at home, and went out. He fled as a prisoner escapes, happy in the mere act of walking, in going across the Pont Louis XVI. and the Champs-Élysées to a café on the boulevard, where he breakfasted alone.

What is there in love? Does nature turn restive under the social yoke? Does nature insist that the spring of a devoted life shall be spontaneous and free, its flow that of a wild torrent tossed by the rocks of contradiction and caprice, instead of a tranquil stream trickling between two banks—the mairie on one side and the church on the other? Has she schemes of her own when she is hatching those volcanic eruptions to which perhaps we owe our great men?

It would have been difficult to find a young man more piously brought up than Calyste, of purer life, or less tainted by infidelity; and he was rushing toward a woman quite unworthy of him, when a merciful and glorious chance brought to him, in Sabine, a girl of really aristocratic beauty, with a refined and delicate mind, pious, loving, and wholly attached to him; her angelic sweetness still touched with the pathos of love, passionate love in spite of marriage—such love as his for Beatrix.

The greatest men, perhaps, have still some clay in their composition; the mire still has charms. So, in spite of folly and frailty, the woman would then be the less imperfect creature. Madame de Rochefide in the midst of the crowd of artistic pretenders who surrounded her, and in spite of her fall,

belonged to the highest nobility all the same; her nature was ethereal rather than earth-born, and she hid the courtesan she meant to be under the most aristocratic exterior. So this explanation cannot account for Calyste's strange passion.

The reason may perhaps be found in a vanity so deeply buried that moralists have not yet discerned that side of vice. There are men, truly noble as Calyste was, and as handsome, rich, elegant, and well bred, who weary—unconsciously perhaps—of wedded life with a nature like their own; beings whose loftiness is not amazed by loftiness, who are left cold by a dignity and refinement on a constant level with their own, but who crave to find in inferior or fallen natures a corroboration of their own superiority though they would not ask their praises. The contrast of moral degradation and magnanimity fascinates their sight. What is pure shines so vividly by the side of what is impure? This comparison is pleasing. Calyste found nothing in Sabine to protect; she was irreproachable; all the wasted energies of his heart went forth to Beatrix. And if we have seen great men playing the part of Jesus, raising up the woman taken in adultery, how should commonplace folk be any wiser?

Calyste lived till two o'clock on the thought, "I shall see her again!" a poem which ere now has proved sustaining during a journey of seven hundred leagues. Then he went with a light step to the Rue de Courcelles; he recognized the house though he had never seen it; and he, the Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law, he, as rich, as noble as the Bourbons, stood at the foot of the stairs, stopped by the question from an old butler, "Your name, if you please, sir?"

Calyste understood that he must leave Madame de Rochefide free to act, and he looked out on the garden and the walls streaked with black and yellow lines left by the rain on the stucco of Paris.

Madame de Rochefide, like most fine ladies when they break their chain, had fled, leaving her fortune in her hus-

band's hands, and she would not appeal for help to her tyrant. Conti and Mademoiselle des Touches had spared Beatrix all the cares of material life, and her mother from time to time sent her a sum of money. Now that she was alone, she was reduced to economy of a rather severe kind to a woman used to luxury. So she had taken herself to the top of the hill on which lies the Parc Monceaux, sheltering herself in a little old house of some departed magnate, facing the street, but with a charming little garden behind it, at a rent of not more than eighteen hundred francs. And still, with an old man-servant, a maid and a cook from Alençon, who had clung to her in her reverses, her poverty would have seemed opulence to many an ambitious middle-class housewife.

Calyste went up a flight of well-whitened stone stairs, the landings gay with flowers. On the second floor the old butler showed Calyste into the rooms through a double door of red velvet paneled with red silk and gilt nails. The rooms he went through were also hung with red silk and velvet. Dark-toned carpets, hangings across the windows and doors, the whole interior was in contrast with the outside, which the owner was at no pains to keep up.

Calyste stood waiting for Beatrix in a drawing-room, quite in style, where luxury affected simplicity. It was hung with bright crimson velvet set off by cording of dull yellow silk; the carpet was a darker red, the windows looked like conservatories, they were so crowded with flowers, and there was so little daylight that he could scarcely see two vases of fine, old red porcelain, and between them a silver cup attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, and brought from Italy by Beatrix. The furniture of gilt wood upholstered with velvet, the handsome consoles, on one of which stood a curious clock, the table covered with a Persian cloth, all bore witness to past wealth, of which the remains were carefully arranged. On a small table Calyste saw some trinkets, and a book half-read, in which the place was marked by a dagger—symbolical of criti-

cism—its handle sparkling with jewels. On the walls ten water-color drawings, handsomely framed, all representing bedrooms in the various houses where Beatrix had lived in the course of her wandering life, gave an idea of her supreme impertinence.

The rustle of a silk dress announced the unfortunate lady, who appeared in a studied toilet, which, if Calyste had been an older hand, would certainly have shown him that he was expected. The dress, made like a dressing-gown to show a triangle of the white throat, was of pearl-gray watered silk with open hanging sleeves, showing the arms covered with an undersleeve made with puffs divided by straps, and with lace ruffles. Her fine hair, loosely fastened with a comb, escaped from under a cap of lace and flowers.

"So soon," said she with a smile. "A lover would not have been so eager. So you have some secrets to tell me, I suppose?" And she seated herself on a sofa, signing to Calyste to take a place by her.

By some chance—not perhaps unintentional, for women have two kinds of memory, that of the angels and that of the devils—Beatrix carried about her the same perfume that she had used at les Touches when she had first met Calyste. The breath of this scent, the touch of that dress, the look of those eyes, which in the twilight seemed to focus and reflect light, all went to Calyste's brain. The unhappy fellow felt the same surge of violence as had already so nearly killed Beatrix; but now the Marquise was on the edge of a divan, not of the ocean; she rose to ring the bell, putting her finger to her lips. At this Calyste, called to order, controlled himself; he understood that Beatrix had no hostile intentions.

"Antoine, I am not at home," said she to the old servant. "Put some wood on the fire. You see, Calyste, I treat you as a friend," she added with dignity when the old man was gone. "Do not treat me as your mistress. I have two remarks to make: First, that I should not make any foolish

stipulations with a man I loved ; next, that I will never belong again to any man in the world. For I believed myself loved, Calyste, by a sort of Rizzio whom no pledges could bind, a man absolutely free, and you see whither that fatal infatuation has brought me. As for you, you are tied to the most sacred duties ; you have a young, amiable, delightful wife ; and you are a father. I should be as inexcusable as you are, and we should both be mad——"

"My dear Beatrix, all your logic falls before one word. I have never loved any one on earth but you, and I married in spite of myself."

"A little trick played us by Mademoiselle des Touches," said she with a smile.

For three hours Madame de Rochefide kept Calyste faithful to his conjugal duties by pressing on him the horrible ultimatum of a complete breach with Sabine. Nothing less, she declared, could reassure her in the dreadful position in which she would be placed by Calyste's passion. And, indeed, she thought little of ruthlessly sacrificing Sabine ; she knew her so well.

"Why, my dear boy, she is a woman who fulfills all the promise of her girlhood. She is a thorough Grandlieu, as brown as her Portuguese mother, not to say orange-colored, and as dry as her father. To speak the truth, your wife will never be lost to you ; she is just a great boy, and can walk alone. Poor Calyste ! is this the wife to suit you ? She has fine eyes, but such eyes are common in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Can a woman so lean be really tender ? Eve was fair ; dark women are descended from Adam, fair women from God, whose hand left a last touch on Eve when all creation was complete."

At about six o'clock Calyste in desperation took up his hat to go.

"Yes, go, my poor friend ; do not let her have the disappointment of dining without you."

Calyste stayed. He was so young, so easy to take on the wrong side.

"You would really dare to dine with me?" said Beatrix, affecting the most provoking surprise. "My humble fare does not frighten you away, and you have enough independence of spirit to crown my joy by this little proof of genuine affection?"

"Only let me write a line to Sabine," said he, "for she would wait for me till nine o'clock."

"There is my writing-table," said Beatrix.

She herself lighted the candles and brought one to the table to see what Calyste would write.

"My dear Sabine."

"My DEAR! Is your wife still dear to you?" said she, looking at him so coldly that it froze the marrow in his bones. "Go, then, go to dine with her."

"I am dining at an eating-house with some friends——"

"That is a lie. For shame! You are unworthy of her love or mine. All men are cowards with us. That will do, monsieur; go and dine with your dear Sabine!"

Calyste threw himself back in his armchair and turned paler than death. Bretons have a sort of obstinate courage which makes them hold their own under difficulties. The young Baron sat up again with his elbow firmly set on the table, his chin in his hand, and his sparkling eyes fixed on Beatrix, who was relentless. He looked so fine that a true northern or southern woman would have fallen on her knees, saying, "Take me!" But in Beatrix, born on the border between Normandy and Brittany, of the race of Casteran, desertion had brought out the ferocity of the Frank and the malignity of the Norman; she craved a tremendous and terrible revenge; she did not yield to his noble impulse.

"Dictate what I am to write, and I will obey," said the poor boy. "But then——"

"Then, yes," she replied, "for you will love me then as

you loved me at Guérande. Write, 'I am dining in town; do not wait.'"

"And——?" said Calyste, expecting something more.

"Nothing. Sign it. Good," she said, seizing this note with covert joy. "I will send it by a messenger."

"Now!" cried Calyste, starting up like a happy man.

"I have preserved my liberty of action, I believe," said she, looking around and pausing half-way between the table and the fireplace, where she was about to ring.

"Here, Antoine, have this note taken to the address. Monsieur will dine with me."

Calyste went home at about two in the morning.

After sitting up till half-past twelve, Sabine had gone to bed, tired out. She slept, though she had been cruelly startled by the brevity of her husband's note; still, she accounted for it. True love in a woman can always explain everything to the advantage of the man she loves.

"Calyste was in a hurry!" thought she.

Next day the child had recovered, the mother's alarms were past. Sabine came in smiling with the little Calyste in her arms to show him to his father just before breakfast, full of the pretty nonsense, and saying the silly things that all young mothers are full of. This little domestic scene enabled Calyste to put a good face on matters, and he was charming to his wife while feeling that he was a wretch. He played like a boy himself with Monsieur le Chevalier; indeed, he overdid it, overacting his part; but Sabine had not reached that pitch of distrust in which a wife notes so subtle a shade.

At last, during breakfast, Sabine asked—

"And what were you doing yesterday?"

"Portenduère," said he, "kept me to dinner, and we went to the club to play a few rubbers of whist."

"It is a foolish life, my Calyste," replied Sabine. "The young men of our day ought rather to think of recovering all the estates in the country that their fathers lost. They can-

not live by smoking cigars, playing whist, and dissipating their idleness by being content with making impertinent speeches to the parvenus who are ousting them from all their dignities, by cutting themselves off from the masses, whose soul and brain they ought to be, and to whom they should appear as Providence. Instead of being a party, you will only be an opinion, as de Marsay said. Oh! if you could only know how my views have expanded since I have rocked and suckled your child. I want to see the old name of du Guénic figure in history."

Then, suddenly looking straight into Calyste's eyes, which were pensively fixed on her, she said—

"You must admit that the first note you ever wrote me was a little abrupt?"

"I never thought of writing till I reached the club."

"But you wrote on a woman's paper; it had some womanly scent."

"The club managers do such queer things——"

The Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife, a charming young couple, had become so intimate with the du Guénics that they shared a box at the Italian opera. The two young women, Sabine and Ursule, had been drawn into this friendship by a delightful exchange of advice, anxieties, and confidences about their babies. While Calyste, a novice in falsehood, was thinking to himself, "I must go to warn Savinien," Sabine was reflecting, "I fancied that the paper was stamped with a coronet!"

The suspicion flashed like lightning through her consciousness, and she blamed herself for it; but she made up her mind to look for the note, which, in the midst of her alarms on the previous day, she had tossed into her letter-box.

After breakfast Calyste went out, telling his wife he should soon return; he got into one of the little low one-horse carriages which were just beginning to take the place of the in-

convenient cabriolet of our grandfathers. In a few minutes he reached the Rue des Saints-Pères, where the Vicomte lived, and begged him to do him the little kindness of lying in case Sabine should question the Vicomtesse—he would do as much for him next time. Then, when once out of the house, Calyste, having first bidden the coachman to hurry as much as possible, went in a few minutes from the Rue des Saints-Pères to the Rue de Courcelles. He was anxious to know how Beatrix had spent the rest of the night.

He found the happy victim of fate just out of her bath, fresh, beautified, and breakfasting with a good appetite. He admired the grace with which his angel ate boiled eggs, and was delighted with the service of gold, a present from a music-mad lord for whom Conti had written some songs, on *ideas* supplied by his lordship, who had published them as his own. Calyste listened to a few piquant anecdotes related by his idol, whose chief aim was to amuse him, though she got angry and cried when he left her. He fancied he had been with her half an hour, and did not get home till three o'clock. His horse, a fine beast given him by the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, looked as if it had come out of the river, it was so streaming with sweat.

By such a chance as a jealous woman always plans, Sabine was on guard at a window looking out into the courtyard, out of patience at Calyste's late return, and uneasy without knowing why. She was struck by the condition of the horse, its mouth full of foam.

"Where has he been?"

The question was whispered in her ear by that power which is not conscience—not the devil, nor an angel—the power which sees, feels, knows, and shows us the unknown; which makes us believe in the existence of spiritual beings, creatures of our own brain, going and coming, and living in the invisible sphere of ideas.

"Where have you come from, my darling?" said she,

going down to the first landing to meet Calyste. "Abd-el-Kader is half-dead; you said you would be out but a few minutes, and I have been expecting you these three hours."

"Well, well," said Calyste to himself, improving in the art of dissimulation, "I must get out of the scrape by a present. Dear little nurse," said he, putting his arm round his wife's waist with a more coaxing pressure than he would have given it if he had not felt guilty, "it is impossible, I see, to keep a secret, however innocent, from a loving wife who——"

"We don't tell secrets on the stairs," she replied, laughing. "Come along!"

In the middle of the drawing-room that led to the bedroom, she saw, reflected in a mirror, Calyste's face, in which, not knowing that it could be seen, his fatigue and his real feelings showed; he had ceased to smile.

"That secret?" said she, turning round.

"You have been such a heroic nurse that the heir-presumptive of the du Guénics is dearer to me than ever; I wanted to surprise you—just like a worthy citizen of the Rue Saint-Denis. A dressing-table is being fitted for you which is a work of art—my mother and Aunt Zéphirine have helped——"

Sabine threw her arms round Calyste, and held him clasped to her heart, her head on his neck, trembling with the weight of happiness, not on account of the dressing-table, but because her suspicions were blown to the winds. It was one of those glorious gushes of joy which can be counted in a lifetime, and of which even the most excessive love cannot be prodigal, for life would be too quickly burnt out. Men ought, in such moments, to kneel at the woman's feet in adoration, for the impulse is sublime; all the powers of the heart and intellect overflow as water gushes from the urn of fountain-nymphs. Sabine melted into tears.

Suddenly, as if stung by a viper, she pushed Calyste from her, dropped on to a divan, and fainted away; the sudden

chill on her glowing heart had almost killed her. As she held Calyste, her nose in his necktie, given up to happiness, she had smelt the same perfume as that on the note-paper! Another woman's head had lain there, her face and hair had left the very scent of adultery. She had just kissed the spot where her rival's kisses were still warm.

"What is the matter?" said Calyste, after bringing Sabine back to her senses by bathing her face with a wet handkerchief.

"Go and fetch the doctor and the accoucheur—both. Yes, I feel the milk has turned to fever—— They will not come at once unless you go yourself——" *Vous*, she said, not *tu*, and the *vous* startled Calyste, who flew off in alarm. As soon as Sabine heard the outer gate shut she sprang to her feet like a frightened deer, and walked round and round the room like a crazy thing, exclaiming, "My God! my God! my God!"

The two words took the place of thought. The crisis she had used as a pretext really came on. The hair on her head felt like so many eels, made red-hot in the fire of nervous torment. Her heated blood seemed to her to have mingled with her nerves, and to be bursting from every pore. For a moment she was blind. "I am dying!" she shrieked.

At this fearful cry of an insulted wife and mother, her maid came in; and when she had been carried to her bed and had recovered her sight and senses, her first gleam of intelligence made her send the woman to fetch her friend Madame de Portenduère. Sabine felt her thoughts swirling in her brain like straws in a whirlwind.

"I saw myraids of them at once," she said afterward.

Then she rang for the manservant, and in the transport of fever found strength enough to write the following note, for she was possessed by a mania, she must be sure of the truth:

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic.

"DEAR MAMMA:—When you come to Paris, as you have led us to hope you may, I will thank you in person for the beautiful present by which you and Aunt Zéphirine and Calyste propose to thank me for having done my duty. I have been amply paid by my own happiness. I cannot attempt to express my pleasure in this beautiful dressing-table: when you are here I will try to tell you. Believe me, when I dress before this glass, I shall always think, like the Roman lady, that my choicest jewel is our darling angel," and so on.

She had this letter posted by her own maid.

When the Vicomtesse de Portenduère came in, the shivering fit of a violent fever had succeeded the first paroxysm of madness.

"Ursule, I believe I am going to die," said she.

"What ails you, my dear?"

"Tell me, what did Calyste and Savinien do yesterday evening after dinner at your house?"

"What dinner?" replied Ursule, to whom her husband had as yet said nothing, not expecting an immediate inquiry. "Savinien and I dined alone last evening, and went to the opera without Calyste."

"Ursule, dear child, in the name of your love for Savinien, I adjure you, keep the secret of what I have asked you and what I will tell you. You alone will know what I am dying of—I am betrayed, at the end of three years—when I am not yet three-and-twenty——"

Her teeth chattered; her eyes were lifeless and dull; her face had the greenish hue and surface of old Venetian glass.

"You—so handsome! But for whom?"

"I do not know. But Calyste has lied to me—twice. Not a word! Do not pity me, do not be indignant, affect

ignorance; you will hear *who*, perhaps, through Savinien. Oh! yesterday's note——"

And, shivering in her shift, she flew to a little cabinet and took out the letter.

"A marquise's coronet!" she said, getting into bed again. "Find out whether Madame de Rochefide is in Paris. Have I a heart left to weep or groan? Oh, my dear, to see my beliefs, my poem, my idol, my virtue, my happiness, all, all destroyed, crushed, lost! There is no God in heaven now, no love on earth, no more life in my heart—nothing! I do not feel sure of the daylight; I doubt if there is a sun. In short, my heart is suffering so cruelly that I hardly feel the horrible pain in my breast and my face. Happily the child is weaned. My milk would have poisoned him!" And at this thought a torrent of tears relieved her eyes, hitherto dry.

Pretty Madame de Portenduère, holding the fatal note which Sabine had smelt of for certainty, stood speechless at this desperate woe, amazed by this death of love, and unable to say anything in spite of the incoherent fragments in which Sabine strove to tell her all. Suddenly Ursule was enlightened by one of those flashes which come only to sincere souls.

"I must save her!" thought she. "Wait until I return, Sabine," cried she. "I will know the truth."

"Oh, and I shall love you in my grave!" cried Sabine.

Madame de Portenduère went to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, insisted on absolute secrecy, and informed her as to the state Sabine was in.

"Madame," said she, in conclusion, "are you not of opinion that, to save her from some dreadful illness, or perhaps even madness—who can tell?—we ought to tell the doctor everything, and invent some fables about that abominable Calyste, so as to make him seem innocent, at any rate, for the present."

"My dear child," said the Duchess, who had felt a chill at this revelation, "friendship has lent you for the nonce the

experience of a woman of my age. I know how Sabine worships her husband; you are right, she may go mad."

"And she might lose her beauty, which would be worse," said the Vicomtesse.

"Let us go at once!" cried the Duchess.

They, happily, were a few minutes in advance of the famous accoucheur Dommanget, the only one of the two doctors whom Calyste had succeeded in finding.

"Ursule has told me all," said the Duchess to her daughter. "You are mistaken. In the first place, Beatrix is not in Paris. As to what your husband was doing yesterday, my darling, he lost a great deal of money, and does not know where to find enough to pay for your dressing-table——"

"And this?" interrupted Sabine, holding out the note.

"This!" said the Duchess, laughing, "is Jockey Club paper. Every one writes on coroneted paper—the grocers will have titles soon——"

The prudent mother tossed the ill-starred document into the fire.

When Calyste and Dommanget arrived, the Duchess, who had given her orders, was informed; she left Sabine with Madame de Portenduère, and met the doctor and Calyste in the drawing-room.

"Sabine's life is in danger, monsieur," said she to Calyste. "You have been false to her with Madame de Rochefide"—Calyste blushed like a still decent girl caught tripping—"and as you do not know how to deceive," the Duchess went on, "you were so clumsy that Sabine guessed everything. You do not wish my daughter's death, I suppose? All this, Monsieur Dommanget, gives you a clue to my daughter's illness and its cause. As for you, Calyste, an old woman like me can understand your error, but I do not forgive you. Such forgiveness can only be purchased by a life of happiness. If you desire my esteem, first save my child's life. Then forget Madame de Rochefide—she is good for nothing after the first

time! Learn to lie, have the courage and impudence of a criminal. I have lied, God knows! I, who shall be compelled to do cruel penance for such mortal sin."

She explained to him the fictions she had just invented. The skillful doctor, sitting by the bed, was studying the patient's symptoms and the means of staving off the mischief. While he was prescribing measures, of which the success must depend on their immediate execution, Calyste, at the foot of the bed, kept his eyes fixed on Sabine, trying to give them an expression of tender anxiety.

"Then it is gambling that has given you those dark marks round your eyes?" she said in a feeble voice.

The words startled the doctor, the mother, and Ursule, who looked at each other; Calyste turned as red as a cherry.

"That comes of suckling your child," said Dommanget, cleverly but roughly. "Then husbands are dull, being so much separated from their wives, they go to the club and play high. But do not lament over the thirty thousand francs that Monsieur le Baron lost last night——"

"Thirty thousand francs!" said Ursule like a simpleton.

"Yes, I know it for certain," replied Dommanget. "I heard this morning at the house of the Duchesse Berthe de Maufrigneuse that you lost the money to Monsieur de Trailles," he added to Calyste. "How can you play with such a man? Honestly, Monsieur le Baron, I understand your being ashamed of yourself."

Calyste, a kind and generous soul, when he saw his mother-in-law—the pious Duchess, the young Viscountess—a happy wife, and a selfish old doctor all lying like curiosity dealers, understood the greatness of the danger; he shed two large tears which deceived Sabine.

"Monsieur," said she, sitting up in bed, and looking wrathfully at Dommanget, "Monsieur du Guénic may lose thirty, fifty, a hundred thousand francs if he chooses without giving any one a right to find fault with him or lecture him,

It is better that Monsieur de Trailles should have won the money from him than that we, *we*, should have won from Monsieur de Trailles ! ''

Calyste rose and put his arm round his wife's neck. Kissing her on both cheeks, he said in her ear, "Sabine, you are an angel ! ''

Two days later the young Baroness was considered out of danger. On the following day Calyste went to Madame de Rochefide, and making a virtue of his infamy—

"Beatrix,'' said he, "you owe me much happiness. I sacrificed my poor wife to you, and she discovered everything. The fatal note-paper on which you made me write, with your initial and coronet on it, which I did not happen to see—I saw nothing but you ! The letter B, happily, was worn away ; but the scent you left clinging to me, the lies in which I entangled myself like a fool, have ruined my happiness. Sabine has been at death's door ; the milk went to her brain, she has erysipelas, and will perhaps be disfigured for life——''

Beatrix, while listening to this harangue, had a face of Arctic coldness, enough to freeze the Seine if she had looked at it.

"Well, so much the better ; it may bleach her a little, perhaps.'' And Beatrix, as dry as her own bones, as variable as her complexion, as sharp as her voice, went on in this tone, a tirade of cruel epigrams.

There can be no greater blunder than for a husband to talk to his mistress of his wife, if she is virtuous, unless it be to talk to his wife of his mistress if she is handsome. But Calyste had not yet had the sort of Parisian education which may be called the good manners of the passions. He could neither tell his wife a lie nor tell his mistress the truth—an indispensable training to enable a man to manage women. So he was obliged to appeal to all the powers of passion for two long hours, to wring from Beatrix the forgiveness he begged, denied him by an angel who raised her eyes to heaven not to see the

culprit, and who uttered the reasons peculiar to marquises in a voice choked with well-feigned tears, that she furtively wiped away with the lace edge of her handkerchief.

"You can talk to me of your wife the very day after I have yielded! Why not say at once that she is a pearl of virtue! I know, she admires your beauty! That is what I call depravity! I—I love your soul! For I assure you, my dear boy, you are hideous compared with some shepherds of the Roman Campagna——," etc., etc.

This tone may seem strange, but it was the part of a system deliberately planned by Beatrix. In her third incarnation—for a woman completely changes with each fresh passion—she is far advanced in fraud—that is the only word that can describe the result of the experience gained in such adventures. The Marquise de Rochefide had sat in judgment on herself in front of her mirror. Clever women have no delusions about themselves; they count their wrinkles; they watch the beginning of crows'-feet; they note the appearance of every speck in their skin; they know themselves by heart, and show it too plainly by the immense pains they take to preserve their beauty. And so, to contend against a beautiful young wife, to triumph over her six days a week, Beatrix sought to win by the weapons of the courtesan. Without confessing to herself the baseness of her conduct, and carried away to use such means by a Turk-like passion for the handsome young man, she resolved to make him believe that he was clumsy, ugly, ill-made, and to behave as if she hated him.

There is no more successful method with men of a domineering nature. To them the conquest of such disdain is the triumph of the first day renewed on every morrow. It is more; it is flattery hidden under the mask of aversion, and owing to it the charm and truth which underlie all the metamorphoses invented by the great nameless poets. Does not a man then say to himself, "I am irresistible!" or "I must love her well, since I conquer her repugnance!" If you

deny this principle, which flirts and courtesans of every social grade discovered long ago, you must discredit the pursuers of science, the inquirers into secrets, who have long been repulsed in their duel with hidden causes.

Beatrix seconded her use of contempt as a moral incitement by a constant comparison between her comfortable, poetic home and the Hôtel du Guénic. Every deserted wife neglects her home out of deep discouragement. Foreseeing this, Madame de Rochefide began covert innuendoes as to the luxury of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which she stigmatized as absurd. The reconciliation scene, when Beatrix made Calyste swear to hate the wife who, as she said, was playing the farce of spilt milk, took place in a perfect bower, where she put herself into attitudes in the midst of beautiful flowers and jardinières of lavish costliness. She carried the art of trifles, of fashionable toys, to an extreme. Beatrix, sunk into contempt since Conti's desertion, was bent on gaining such fame as may be had by sheer perversity. The woes of a young wife, a Grandlieu, rich and lovely, were to build her a pedestal.

When a woman reappears in society after nursing her first child, she comes out again improved in charm and beauty. If this phase of maternity can rejuvenate even women no longer in their first youth, it gives young wives a splendid freshness, a cheerful activity, a *brio* of life—if we may apply to the body a word which the Italians have invented for the mind. But while trying to resume the pleasant habits of the honeymoon, Sabine did not find the same Calyste. The unhappy girl watched him instead of abandoning herself to happiness. She expected the fatal perfume, and she smelt it; and she no longer confided in Ursule, nor in her mother, who had so charitably deceived her. She wanted certainty, and she had not long to wait for it. Certainty is never coy; it is like the sun, we soon need to pull down the blinds before it. In love it is a repetition of the fable of the Woodman calling

on Death. We wish that certainty would blind us. One morning, a fortnight after the first catastrophe, Sabine received this dreadful letter:

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic.

"GUÉRANDE.

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER:—My sister Zéphirine and I are lost in conjectures as to the dressing-table mentioned in your letter; I am writing about it to Calyste, and beg your forgiveness for my ignorance. You cannot doubt our affection. We are saving treasure for you. Thanks to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's advice as to the management of your land, you will in a few years find yourself possessed of a considerable capital without having to diminish your expenditure.

"Your letter, dearest daughter—whom I love as much as if I had borne you and fed you at my own breast—surprised me by its brevity, and especially by your making no mention of my dear little Calyste; you had nothing to tell me about the elder Calyste; he, I know, is happy," etc.

Sabine wrote across this letter, "*Brittany is too noble to lie with one accord!*" and laid it on Calyste's writing-table. He found it and read it. After recognizing Sabine's writing in the line across it, he threw it into the fire, determined never to have seen it. Sabine spent a whole week in misery, of which the secret may be understood by those celestial or hermit souls that have never been touched by the wing of the fallen angel. Calyste's silence terrified Sabine.

"I, who ought to be all sweetness, all joy to him—I have vexed him, hurt him! My virtue is become hateful; I have perhaps humiliated my idol," said she to herself.

These thoughts ploughed furrows in her soul. She thought of asking forgiveness for this fault, but certainty brought her fresh proofs.

Beatrix, insolently bold, wrote to Calyste one day at his own house. The letter was put into Madame du Guénic's hands; she gave it to her husband unopened, but she said, with death in her soul, and in a broken voice—

"My dear, this note is from the Jockey Club; I know the scent and the paper."

Calyste blushed and put the letter in his pocket.

"Why do you not read it?"

"I know what they want."

The young wife sat down. She did not get an attack of fever, she did not cry, but she felt one of those surges of rage which in such feeble creatures bring forth monsters of crime, which arm them with arsenic for themselves or for their rivals. Little Calyste was presently brought to her, and she took him on her lap; the child, but just weaned, turned to find the breast under her dress.

"He remembers!" said she in a whisper.

Calyste went to his room to read the letter. When he was gone the poor young creature burst into tears, such tears as women shed when they are alone. Pain, like pleasure, has its initiatory stage; the first anguish, like that of which Sabine had so nearly died, can never recur, any more than a first experience of any kind. It is the first wedge of the torture of the heart; the others are expected, the wringing of the nerves is a known thing, the capital of strength has accumulated a deposit for firm resistance. And Sabine, sure now of the worst, sat by the fire for three hours with her boy on her knee, and was quite startled when Gasselin, now their house-servant, came to announce that dinner was on the table.

"Let monsieur know."

"Monsieur is not dining at home, Madame la Baronne."

Who can tell all the misery for a young woman of three-and-twenty, the torture of finding herself alone in the midst of a vast dining-room, in an ancient house, served by silent men and in such circumstances?

"Order the carriage," she said suddenly; "I am going to the opera."

She dressed splendidly; she meant to show herself alone, and smiling like a happy woman. In the midst of her remorse for the endorsement on that letter she was determined to triumph, to bring Calyste back to her by the greatest gentleness, by wifely virtues, by the meekness of a Paschal lamb. She would lie to all Paris. She loved him, she loved him as courtesans love, or angels, with pride and with humility.

But the opera was "Othello." When Rubini sang *Il mio cor si divide*, she fled. Music is often more powerful than the poet and the actor, the two most formidable natures combined. Savinien de Portenduère accompanied Sabine to the portico and put her into her carriage, unable to account for her precipitate escape.

Madame du Guénic now entered on a period of sufferings such as only the highest classes can know. You who are poor, envious, wretched, when you see on ladies' arms those snakes with diamond heads, those necklaces and pins, tell yourselves that those vipers sting, that those necklaces have poisoned teeth, that those light bonds cut into the tender flesh to the very quick. All this luxury must be paid for. In Sabine's position women can curse the pleasures of wealth; they cease to see the gilding of their rooms, the silk of sofas is as tow, exotic flowers as nettles, perfumes stink, miracles of cookery scrape the throat like barley-bread, and life has the bitterness of the Dead Sea.

Two or three instances will so plainly show the reaction of a room or of a woman on happiness, that every one who has experienced it will be reminded of their home-life.

Sabine, warned of the dreadful truth, studied her husband when he was going out, to guess at the day's prospects. With what a surge of suppressed fury does a woman fling herself on to the red-hot pikes of such torture? What joy for Sabine when he did not go to the Rue de Courcelles!

When he came in she would look at his brow, his hair, his eyes, his expression and attitude, with a horrible interest in trifles, and the studious observation of the most recondite details of his dress, by which a woman loses her self-respect and dignity. These sinister investigations, buried in her heart, turned sour there and corroded the slender roots, whence grow the blue flowers of holy confidence, the golden stars of saintly love, all the blossoms of memory.

One day Calyste looked around at everything with ill-humor, but he stayed at home. Sabine was coaxing and humble, cheerful and amusing.

"You are cross with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife? What is there here that you do not like?"

"All the rooms are so cold and bare," said he. "You do not understand this kind of thing."

"What is wanting?"

"Flowers——"

"Very good," said Sabine to herself; "Madame de Rochefide is fond of flowers, it would seem."

Two days later the rooms at the Hôtel du Guénic were completely altered. No house in Paris could pride itself on finer flowers than those that decorated it.

Some time after this Calyste, one evening after dinner, complained of the cold. He shivered in his chair, looking about him to see whence the draught came, and evidently seeking something close about him. It was some time before Sabine could guess the meaning of this new whim, for the house was fitted with a hot-air furnace to warm the staircase, anterooms and passages. Finally, after three days' meditation, it struck her that her rival had a screen, no doubt, so as to produce the subdued light that was favorable to the deterioration of her face; so Sabine purchased a screen made of glass, and of Jewish magnificence.

"Which way will the wind blow now?" she wondered.

This was not the end of the mistress' indirect criticism.

Calyste ate so little at home as to drive Sabine crazy; he sent away his plate after nibbling two or three mouthfuls.

"Is it not nice?" asked Sabine, in despair, seeing all the pains wasted which she devoted to her conferences with the cook.

"I do not say so, my darling," replied Calyste, without annoyance. "I am not hungry, that is all."

A wife given up to a legitimate passion and to such a contest as this, feels a sort of fury in her desire to triumph over her rival, and often outruns the mark even in the most secret regions of married life. This cruel struggle, fierce and ceaseless, over the visible and outward facts of home life was carried on with equal frenzy over the feelings of the heart. Sabine studied her attitude and dress, and watched herself in the smallest trivialities of love.

This matter of the cookery went on for nearly a month. Sabine, with the help of Mariotte and Gasselin, invented stage tricks to discover what dishes Madame de Rochefide served up for Calyste. Gasselin took the place of the coachman, who fell ill to order, and was thus enabled to make friends with Beatrix's cook; so at last Sabine could give Calyste the same fare, only better; but again she saw him give himself airs over it.

"What is wanting?" she said.

"Nothing," he answered, looking round the table for something that was not there.

"Ah!" cried Sabine to herself, as she woke next morning, "Calyste is pining for powdered cockroaches* and all the English condiments which are sold by the druggist in cruets; Madame de Rochefide has accustomed him to all sorts of spices."

She bought an English cruet-stand and its scorching con-

* Balzac has *hannetons*, cockchafers. It was an old joke that Soy was made of cockroaches.—TRANSLATOR.

tents; but she could not pursue her discoveries down to every dainty devised by her rival.

This phase lasted for several months; nor need we wonder when we remember all the attractions of such a contest. It is life; with all its wounds and pangs, it is preferable to the blank gloom of disgust, to the poison of contempt, to the blankness of abdication, to the death of the heart that we call indifference. Still, all Sabine's courage oozed out one evening when she appeared dressed, as women only dress by a sort of inspiration, in the hope of winning the victory over another, and when Calyste said with a laugh—

"Do what you will, Sabine, you will never be anything but a lovely Andalusian!"

"Alas!" said she, sinking on to her sofa, "I can never be fair. But if this goes on, I know that I shall soon be five-and-thirty."

She refused to go to the Italian opera; she meant to stay in her room all the evening. When she was alone she tore the flowers from her hair and stamped upon them, she undressed, trampled her gown, her sash, all her finery under foot, exactly like a goat caught in a loop of its tether, which never ceases struggling till death. Then she went to bed. The maid presently came in. Imagine her surprise!

"It is nothing," said Sabine. "It is monsieur."

Unhappy wives know this superb vanity, these falsehoods, where, of two kinds of shame both in arms, the more womanly wins the day.

Sabine was growing thin under these terrible agitations, grief ate into her soul; but she never forgot the part she had forced on herself. A sort of fever kept her up; her life sent back to her throat the bitter words suggested to her by grief; she sheathed the lightnings of her fine black eyes and made them soft, even humble.

Her fading health was soon perceptible. The Duchess, an

admirable mother, though her piety had become more and more Portuguese, thought there was some mortal disease in the really sickly condition which Sabine evidently encouraged. She knew of the acknowledged intimacy of Calyste and Beatrix. She took care to have her daughter with her to try to heal her wounded feelings, and, above all, to save her from her daily martyrdom; but Sabine for a long time remained persistently silent as to her woes, fearing some intervention between herself and Calyste. She declared she was happy! Having exhausted sorrow, she fell back on her pride, on all her virtues.

At the end of a month, however, of being petted by her sister Clotilde and her mother, she confessed her griefs, told them all her sufferings, and cursed life, saying that she looked forward to death with delirious joy. She desired Clotilde, who meant never to marry, to be a mother to little Calyste, the loveliest child any royal race need wish for as its heir-presumptive.

One evening, sitting with her youngest sister Athénaïs—who was to be married to the Vicomte de Grandlieu after Lent—with Clotilde and the Duchess, Sabine uttered the last cry of her anguish of heart, wrung from her by the extremity of her last humiliation.

"Athénaïs," said she, when at about eleven o'clock the young Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu took his leave, "you are going to be married; profit by my example! Keep your best qualities to yourself as if they were a crime, resist the temptation to display them in order to please Juste. Be calm, dignified, cold; measure out the happiness you give in proportion to what you receive! It is mean, but it is necessary. You see, I am ruined by my merits. All I feel within me that is the best of me, that is fine, holy, noble—all my virtues have been rocks on which my happiness is shipwrecked. I have ceased to be attractive because I am not six-and-thirty!

In some men's eyes youth is a defect! There is no guess-work in a guileless face.

"I laugh honestly, and that is quite wrong when, to be fascinating, you ought to be able to elaborate the melancholy, suppressed smile of the fallen angels who are obliged to hide their long yellow teeth. A fresh complexion is so monotonous; far preferable is a doll's waxen surface, compounded of rouge, spermaceti, and cold-cream. I am straightforward, and double dealing is more pleasing! I am frankly in love like an honest woman, and I ought to be trained to tricks and manœuvres like a country actress. I am intoxicated with the delight of having one of the most charming men in France for my husband, and I tell him sincerely how fine a gentleman he is, how gracefully he moves, how handsome I think him; to win him I ought to look away with affected aversion, to hate love-making, to tell him that his air of distinction is simply an unhealthy pallor and the figure of a consumptive patient, to cry up the shoulders of the Farnese Hercules, to make him angry, keep him at a distance as though a struggle were needed to hide from him at the moment of happiness some imperfection which might destroy love. I am so unlucky as to be able to admire a fine thing without striving to give myself importance by bitter and envious criticism of everything glorious in poetry or beauty. I do not want to be told in verse and in prose by Canalis and Nathan that I have a superior intellect! I am a mere simple girl; I see no one but Calyste!

"If I had only run over all the world as she has; if, like her, I had said, 'I love you,' in every European tongue, I should be made much of, and pitied, and adored, and could serve him up a Macedonian banquet of cosmopolitan loves! A man does not thank you for your tenderness till you have set it off by contrast with malignity. So I, a well-born wife, must learn all impurity, the interested charms of a harlot!—— And Calyste, the dupe of this grimacing!—— Oh, mother!

oh, my dear Clotilde! I am stricken to death. My pride is a deceptive ægis; I am defenseless against sorrow; I still love my husband like a fool, and to bring him back to me I need to borrow the keen wit of indifference."

"Silly child," whispered Clotilde, "pretend that you are bent on vengeance."

"I mean to die blameless, without even the appearance of wrong-doing," replied Sabine. "Our vengeance should be worthy of our love."

"My child," said the Duchess, "a mother should look on life with colder eyes than yours. Love is not the end but the means of family life. Do not imitate that poor little Baronne de Macumer. Excessive passion is barren and fatal. And God sends us our afflictions for reasons of His own which we cannot understand.

"Now that Athénaïs' marriage is a settled thing, I shall have time to attend to you. I have already discussed the delicate position in which you are placed with your father and the Duc de Chaulieu and d'Ajuda. We shall find means to bring Calyste back to you."

"With the Marquise de Rochefide there is no cause for despair," said Clotilde, smiling at her sister. "She does not keep her adorers long."

"D'Ajuda, my darling, was Monsieur de Rochefide's brother-in-law. If our good confessor approves of the little manœuvres we must achieve to insure the success of the plan I have submitted to your father, I will guarantee Calyste's return. My conscience loathes the use of such methods, and I will lay them before the Abbé Brossette. We need not wait, my child, till you are *in extremis* to come to your assistance. Keep up your hopes. Your grief this evening is so great that I have let out my secret; I cannot bear not to give you a little encouragement."

"Will it cause Calyste any grief?" asked Sabine, looking anxiously at the Duchess.

"Bless me, shall I be such another fool?" asked Athénaïs simply.

"Oh! child, you cannot know the straits into which virtue can plunge us when she allows herself to be overruled by love?" replied Sabine, so bewildered with grief that she fell into a vein of poetry.

The words were spoken with such intense bitterness that the Duchess, enlightened by her daughter's tone, accent, and look, understood that there was some unconfessed trouble.

"Girls, it is midnight; go to bed," said she to the two others, whose eyes were sparkling.

"And am I in the way, too, in spite of my six-and-thirty years?" asked Clotilde ironically. And while Athénaïs was kissing her mother, she whispered in Sabine's ear—

"You shall tell me all about it. I will dine with you to-morrow. If mamma is afraid of compromising her conscience, I myself will rescue Calyste from the hands of the infidels."

"Well, Sabine," said the Duchess, leading her daughter into her bedroom, "tell me, my child, what is the new trouble?"

"Oh, mother, I am done for!"

"Why?"

"I wanted to triumph over that horrible woman; I succeeded, I have another child coming, and Calyste loves her so vehemently that I foresee being absolutely deserted. When she has proof of this infidelity to her she will be furious. Oh, I am suffering such torments that I must die. I know when he is going to her, know it by his glee; then his surliness shows me when he has left her. In short, he makes no secret of it; he cannot endure me. Her influence over him is as unwholesome as she is herself, body and soul. You will see; as her reward for making up some quarrel, she will insist on a public rupture with me, a breach like her own; she will carry him off to Switzerland, perhaps, or to Italy. He has been

saying that it is ridiculous to know nothing of Europe, and I can guess what these hints mean, thrown out as a warning. If Calyste is not cured within the next three months, I do not know what will come of it—I shall kill myself, I know!"

"Unhappy child! And your son? Suicide is a mortal sin."

"But you do not understand—she might bear him a child; and if Calyste loved that woman's more than mine—— Oh! this is the end of my patience and resignation."

She dropped on a chair; she had poured out the inmost thoughts of her heart; she had no hidden pang left; and sorrow is like the iron prop that sculptors place inside a clay figure—it is supporting, it is a power.

"Well, well, go home now, poor little thing! Face to face with so much suffering, perhaps the abbé will give me absolution for the venial sins we are forced to commit by the trickery of the world. Leave me, daughter," she said, going to her prie-Dieu; "I will beseech the Lord and the blessed Virgin more especially for you. Above all, do not neglect your religious duties if you hope for success."

"Succeed as we may, mother, we can only save the family honor. Calyste has killed the sacred fervor of love in me by exhausting all my powers, even of suffering. What a honeymoon was that in which from the first day I was bitterly conscious of his retrospective adultery!"

At about one in the afternoon of the following day one of the priests of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—a man distinguished among the clergy of Paris, designate as a bishop in 1840, but who had three times refused a see—the Abbé Brossette, was crossing the courtyard of the Hôtel Grandlieu with the peculiar gait one must call the ecclesiastical gait, so expressive is it of prudence, mystery, calmness, gravity, and dignity itself. He was a small, lean man, about fifty years of age, with a face as white as an old woman's, chilled by

"LEAVE ME, DAUGHTER," SHE SAID, GOING TO HER PRIE-DIEU.



priestly fasting, furrowed by all the sufferings he made his own. Black eyes, alight with faith, but softened by an expression that was mysterious rather than mystical, gave life to this apostolic countenance. He almost smiled as he went up the steps, so little did he believe in the enormity of the case for which his penitent had sent for him; but, as the Duchess' hand was a sieve for alms, she was well worth the time her guileless confessions stole from the serious troubles of his parish. On hearing him announced, the Duchess arose and went forward a few steps to meet him, an honor she did to none but cardinals, bishops, priests of every grade, duchesses older than herself, and personages of the blood royal.

"My dear abbé," said she, pointing to an armchair, and speaking in a low tone, "I require the authority of your experience before I embark on a rather nasty intrigue, from which, however, I hope for a good result; I wish to learn from you whether I shall find the way of salvation very thorny in consequence."

"Madame la Duchesse," said the Abbé Brossette, "do not mix up spiritual and worldly matters; they are often irreconcilable. In the first place, what is this business?"

"My daughter Sabine, you know, is dying of grief. Monsieur du Guénic neglects her for Madame de Rochefide."

"It is terrible—a very serious matter; but you know what the beloved Saint-François de Sales says of such a case. And remember Madame de Guyon, who bewailed the lack of mysticism in the proofs of conjugal love; she would have been only too glad to find a Madame de Rochefide for her husband."

"Sabine is only too meek, she is only too completely the Christian wife; but she has not the smallest taste for mysticism."

"Poor young thing!" said the curé slily. "And what is your plan for remedying the mischief?"

"I have been so sinful, my dear director, as to think that I might let loose at her a smart little gentleman, willful, and

stocked with evil characteristics, who will certainly get my son-in-law out of the way."

"Daughter," said he, stroking his chin, "we are not in the tribunal of the repentant; I need not speak as your judge. From a worldly point of view, I confess it would be final——"

"Such a proceeding strikes me as truly odious!" she put in.

"And why? It is, no doubt, far more the part of a Christian to snatch a woman from her evil ways than to push her forward in them; still, when she has already gone so far as Madame de Rochefide, it is not the hand of man, but the hand of God, that can rescue the sinner. She needs a special sign from heaven."

"Thank you, father, for your indulgence," said the Duchess. "But we must remember that my son-in-law is brave and a Breton; he was heroic at the time of that poor MADAME'S attempted rising. Now, if the young scapegrace who should undertake to charm Madame de Rochefide were to fall out with Calyste, and a duel should ensue——"

"There, Madame la Duchesse, you show your wisdom; this proves that in such devious courses we always find some stumbling-block."

"But I hit upon a means, my dear abbé, of doing good, of rescuing Madame de Rochefide from the fatal path she is following, of bringing Calyste back to his wife, and of saving a poor wandering soul perhaps from hell——"

"But, then, why consult me?" said the curé, smiling.

"Well," said the Duchess, "I should have to do some ugly things——"

"You do not mean to rob any one?"

"On the contrary, I shall probably spend a good deal of money."

"You will not slander anybody, nor——"

"Oh!"

"Nor do any injury to your neighbor?"

"Well, well, I cannot answer for that."

"Let us hear this new plan," said the curé, really curious.

"If, instead of driving one nail out by another, thought I, as I knelt on my prie-Dieu, after beseeching the blessed Virgin to guide me, I were to get Monsieur de Rochefide to take back his wife and pack off Calyste—then, instead of abetting evil to do good, I should be doing a good action through another by means of a no less good deed of my own——" The priest looked at the lady, and seemed thoughtful.

"The idea has evidently come to you from so far that——"

"Yes," said the simple and humble-minded woman, "and I have thanked the Virgin. And I vowed that beside paying for a novena, I would give twelve hundred francs to some poor family if I should succeed. But when I spoke of the matter to Monsieur de Grandlieu, he burst out laughing, and said—'I really believe that at your time of life you women have a special devil all to yourselves.'"

"Monsieur le Duc said, in a husband's fashion, just what I was about to observe when you interrupted me," replied the abbé, who could not helping smiling.

"Oh, father, if you approve of the plan, will you approve of the method of execution? The point will be to do with a certain Madame Schontz—a Beatrix of the Saint-Georges quarter—what I had intended to do with Beatrix; the Marquis will then return to his wife."

"I am sure you will do no wrong," said the abbé dexterously, not choosing to know more, as he thought the result necessary. "And you can consult me if your conscience makes itself heard," he added. "Supposing that instead of affording the lady in the Rue Saint-Georges some fresh occasion of misconduct, your were to find her a husband?——"

"Ah, my dear director, you have set right the only bad feature of my scheme. You are worthy to be an archbishop, and I hope to live to address you as your Eminence."

"In all this, I see but one hitch," the priest went on.

"And what is that?"

"Madame de Rochefide might keep your son-in-law even if she returned to her husband?"

"That is my affair," said the Duchess. "We, who so rarely intrigue, when we do——"

"Do it badly, very badly," said the abbé. "Practice is needed for everything. Try to annex one of the rascally race who live on intrigue and employ him without betraying yourself."

"Oh! Monsieur le Curé, but if we have recourse to hell, will heaven be on our side?"

"You are not in the confessional," replied the abbé; "save your child."

The good Duchess, delighted with the keeper of her conscience, escorted him as far as the drawing-room door.

A storm, it will be seen, was gathering over Monsieur de Rochefide, who, at this time, was enjoying the greatest share of happiness that a Parisian need desire, finding himself quite as much the master in Madame Schontz's house as in his wife's; as the Duke had very shrewdly remarked to his wife, it would seem impossible to upset so delightful and perfect a plan of life. This theory of the matter necessitates a few details as to the life led by Monsieur de Rochefide since his wife had placed him in the position of a deserted husband. We shall thus understand the enormous difference in the view taken by law and by custom of the two sexes in the same circumstances. Everything that works woe to a deserted wife becomes happiness to the deserted husband. This striking antithesis may perhaps induce more than one young wife to remain in her home and fight it out, like Sabine du Guénic, by practicing the most cruel or the most inoffensive virtues, whichever she may prefer.

A few days after Beatrix's flight, Arthur de Rochefide—an only child after the death of his sister, the first wife of the

Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, who left him no children—found himself master of the family mansion of the Rochefides, Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré, and of two hundred thousand francs a year, left to him by his father. This fine fortune, added to that which he had when he married, raised his income, including his wife's portion, to a thousand francs a day. To a gentleman of such a character as Mademoiselle des Touches had sketched to Calyste, such a fortune was happiness. While his wife was occupied with lovemaking and motherhood, Rochefide was enjoying his vast possessions, but he did not waste the money any more than he would waste his intelligence. His burly, good-natured conceit, amply satisfied with the reputation for being a fine man, to which he owed some success, entitling him, as he believed, to condemn women as a class, gave itself full play in the sphere of intellect. He was gifted with the sort of wit which may be termed refracting, by the way he repeated other persons' jests and witticisms from plays or the newspapers; he appropriated them as his own; he affected to ridicule them, caricaturing them in repetition, and using them as a formula of criticism; then his military high spirits—for he had served in the King's Guard—lent spice to his conversation, so that dull women called him witty, and the rest dared not contradict them.

Arthur carried this system out in everything; he owed to nature the useful trick of being an imitator without being an ape; he could imitate quite seriously. And so, though he had no taste, he was always the first to take up and to drop a fashion. He was accused of giving too much time to his toilet and of wearing stays; but he was a typical example of those men who, by accepting the notions and the follies of others, never offend any one, who, always being up to date, never grow any older. They are the heroes of the second-rate.

This husband was pitied; Beatrix was held inexcusable for having run away from the best fellow in the world; ridicule

fell only on the wife. This worthy, loyal, and very silly gentleman, a member of every club, a subscriber to every absurdity to which blundering patriotism and party-spirit gave rise, with a facile good-nature which brought him to the front on every occasion, was, of course, bent on glorifying himself by some fashionable hobby. His chief pride was to be the sultan of a four-footed seraglio, managed by an old English groom, and this kennel cost him from four to five thousand francs a month. His favorite fad was running horses; he patronized breeders, and paid the expenses of a paper in the racing interest; but he knew little about horses, and from the bridle to the shoes trusted to his groom. This is enough to show that this "grass-husband" had nothing of his own—neither wit, nor taste, nor position, nor even absurdities; and his fortune had come to him from his forefathers.

After having tasted all the annoyances of married life, he was so happy to find himself a bachelor again that he would say among friends, "I was born to good luck!" He rejoiced especially in being able to live free of the expenses to which married folk are compelled; and his house, in which nothing had been altered since his father's death, was in the state of a man's home when he is traveling; he rarely went there, never fed there, and scarcely ever slept there.

This was the history of this neglect: After many love affairs, tired of women of fashion, who are indeed weariful enough, and who set too many dry thorn-hedges round the happiness they have to give, he had practically married Madame Schontz, a woman notorious in the world of Fanny Beaupré and Suzanne du Val-Noble, of Mariettes, Florentines, Jenny Cadines, and the like. This world—of which one of our draughtsmen wittily remarked, as he pointed to the whirl of an opera ball, "When you think that all that mob is well housed, and dressed, and fed, you can form a good idea of what men are!"—this dangerous world has already been seen in this History of Manners in the typical

figures of Florine and the famous Malaga (of "A Daughter of Eve" and "The Imaginary Mistress"); but to paint it faithfully, the historian would have to represent such persons in some numerical proportion to the variety of their strange individual lives, ending in poverty of the most hideous kind, in early death, in ease, in happy marriages, or sometimes in great wealth.

Madame Schontz, at first known as la Petite Aurélie, to distinguish her from a rival far less clever than herself, belonged to the higher class of these women on whose social uses no doubt can be thrown either by the prefect of the Seine or by those who take an interest in the prosperity of the city of Paris. Certainly the "rats" accused of devouring fortunes, which are often imaginary, in some respects are more like a beaver. Without the Aspasias of the Notre-Dame de Lorette quarter, fewer houses would be built in Paris. Pioneers of fresh stucco, in tow of speculation, pitch their outlying tents along the hillsides of Montmartre, beyond those deserts of masonry which are to be seen in the streets round the Place de l'Europe—Amsterdam, Milan, Stockholm, London, and Moscow—architectural steppes betraying their emptiness by endless placards announcing APARTMENTS TO LET.

The position of these ladies is commensurate with that of their lodgings in these innominate regions. If the house is near the line marked by the Rue de Provence, the woman has money in the Funds, her income is assured; but if she lives out near the exterior boulevards, or on the height toward the horrible suburb of Batignolles, she is certainly poor.

Now when Monsieur de Rochefide first met Madame Schontz, she was lodging on the fourth floor of the only house then standing in the Rue de Berlin. The name of this unmarried wife, as you will have understood, was neither Aurélie nor Schontz. She concealed her father's name—that of an old soldier of the Empire, the perennial colonel who

always adorns the origin of these existences, as the father or the seducer. Madame Schontz had enjoyed the benefits of a gratuitous education at Saint-Denis, where the young persons are admirably taught, but where the young persons are not provided on leaving with husbands or a living—an admirable foundation of the Emperor's, the only thing lacking being the Emperor himself! "I shall be there to provide for the daughters of my legionaries," said he, in answer to one of his ministers who looked forward to the future. And in the same way Napoleon said "I shall be there" to the members of the Institute, to whom it would be better to give no honorarium at all than to pay them eighty-three francs a month, less than the wages of many an office clerk.

Aurélie was very certainly the daughter of the valiant Colonel Schiltz, a leader of those daring Alsatian partisans who so nearly succeeded in saving the Emperor in the French campaign; he died at Metz, robbed, neglected, and ruined. In 1814 Napoleon sent little Joséphine Schiltz, then nine years old, to school at Saint-Denis. Without father or mother, home or money, the poor child was not driven out of the institution on the second return of the Bourbons. She remained there as under-teacher until 1827; but then her patience failed and her beauty led her astray. When she was of age, Joséphine Schiltz, the Empress' god-daughter, embarked on the adventurous life of the courtesan, tempted to this doubtful career by the fatal example of some of her school-fellows as destitute as she was, and who rejoiced in their decision. She substituted *on* for *il* in her father's name, and placed herself under the protection of Saint Aurelia.

Clever, witty, and well informed, she made more mistakes than her more stupid companions, whose wrong-doing was always based on self-interest. After various connections with writers, some poor but unmannerly, some clever but in debt; after trying her fortune with some rich men as close-fisted as they were silly; after sacrificing ease to a true passion, and

learning in every school where experience may be gained, one day, when, in the depths of poverty, she was dancing at Valentino's—the first stage to Musard's—dressed in a borrowed gown, hat, and cape, she attracted Rochefide's attention; he had come to see the famous galop! Her cleverness bewitched the gentleman, who had exhausted every sensation; and when, two years after, being deserted by Beatrix, whose wit had often disconcerted him, he allied himself with a second-hand Beatrix "of the Thirteenth Arrondissement," no one thought of blaming him.

We may here give a sketch of the four seasons of such a happy home. It is desirable to show how the theory of "a marriage in the Thirteenth Arrondissement" includes all the whole connection. Whether a marquis of forty or a retired storekeeper of sixty, a millionaire six times over or a man of narrow private means, a fine gentleman or a middle-class citizen, the tactics of passion, barring the differences inseparable from dissimilar social spheres, never vary. Heart and banking account maintain an exact and definite relation. And you will be able to form an idea of the obstacles the Duchess must meet with to her charitable scheme.

Few persons understand the power of words over ordinary folk in France, or the mischief done by the wits who invent them. For instance, no bookkeeper could add up the figures of the sums of money which have lain unproductive and rusty at the bottom of generous hearts and full coffers in consequence of the mean phrase *Tirer une carotte*—to fleece or bleed a victim. The words have become so common that they must be allowed to deface this page. Beside, if we venture into the "Thirteenth Arrondissement," we must needs adopt its picturesque language.

Monsieur de Rochefide, like all small minds, was constantly in fear of being bled. From the beginning of his attachment to Madame Schontz, Arthur was on his guard, and was at that time a dreadful screw, very *rat*, to use another slang word of

the studio and the brothel. This word *rat* (which in French has many slang uses) when applied to a young girl means the person entertained, but applied to a man means the stingy entertainer. Madame Schontz had too much intelligence, and knew men too thoroughly, not to found high hopes on such a beginning. Monsieur de Rochefide allowed Madame Schontz five hundred francs a month, furnished, meagrely enough, a set of rooms at twelve hundred francs a year on the second floor of a house in the Rue Coquenard, and set himself to study Aurélie's character; and she, finding herself spied upon, gave him character to study.

Rochefide was delighted to have come across a woman of such a noble nature, but it did not astonish him; her mother was a Barnheim of Baden, quite a lady! And then Aurélie had been so well brought up! Speaking English, German, and Italian, she was versed in foreign literature; she could pit herself, without discomfiture, against pianists of the second class. And, note the point! she behaved as regarded her talents like a woman of breeding: she never talked about them. In a painter's studio she would take up a brush in fun and sketch a head with so much *go* as to amaze the company. As a pastime, when she was pining as a school-teacher, she had dabbled in some sciences, but her life as a kept mistress had sown salt over all this good seed, and, of course, she laid the flowers of these precious growths, revived for him, at Arthur's feet. Thus did Aurélie at first make a display of disinterestedness to match the pleasures she could give, which enabled this light corvette to cast her grappling-irons firmly on board the statelier craft. Still, even at the end of the first year, she made a vulgar noise in the anteroom, managing to come in just when the Marquis was waiting for her, and tried to hide the disgracefully muddy hem of her gown in such a way as to make it more conspicuous. In short, she so cleverly contrived to persuade her *Gros Papa* that her utmost ambition, after so many vicissitudes, was to enjoy a simple,

middle-class existence, that by the end of ten months the second phase of their connection began.

Then Madame Schontz had a fine apartment in the Rue Saint-Georges. Arthur, who could no longer conceal from her the fact of his wealth, gave her handsome furniture, a service of plate, twelve hundred francs a month, and a little, low carriage, with a single horse, by the week, and he granted her a little groom with a fairly good grace. She knew what this munificence was worth; she detected the motives of her Arthur's conduct, and saw in them the calculations of a close-fisted man. Tired of living at restaurants, where the food is generally execrable, where the simplest dinner of any refinement cost sixty francs, and two hundred for a party of four friends, Rochefide offered Madame Schontz forty francs a day for his dinner and a friend's, wine included. Aurélie had no mind to refuse. After getting all her moral bills of exchange accepted, drawn on Monsieur de Rochefide's habits at a year's date, she was favorably heard when she asked for five hundred francs a year more for dress, on the plea that her *Gros Papa*, whose friends all belonged to the Jockey Club, might not be ashamed of her.

"A pretty thing, indeed," said she, "if Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, la Roche-Hugon, Ronquerolles, Laginski, Lenoncourt, and the rest should see you with a Madame Everard! Put your trust in me, *Gros Père*, and you will be the gainer."

And Aurélie did, in fact, lay herself out for a fresh display of virtues in these new circumstances. She sketched a part for herself as the housewife, in which she won ample credit. She made both ends meet, said she, at the end of the month, and had no debts, on two thousand five hundred francs, such a thing as had never been seen in the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the Thirteenth Arrondissement—the upper ten of the demi-reps world; and she gave dinners infinitely better than Nucingen's, with first-class wines at ten and twelve francs a bottle. So that Rochefide, amazed and delighted to be able to ask

his friends pretty often to his mistress' house as a matter of economy, would say to her, with his arm round her waist, "You are a perfect treasure!"

Before long he took a third share in an opera box for her, and at last went with her to first-night performances. He began to take counsel of his Aurélie, acknowledging the soundness of her advice; she allowed him to appropriate the wit she was always ready with; and her sallies, being new, won him the reputation for being an amusing man. At last he felt perfectly sure that she loved him truly, and for himself. Aurélie refused to make a Russian prince happy at the rate of five thousand francs a month.

"You are a happy man, my dear Marquis," cried old Prince Galathionne as they ended a rubber of whist at the club. "Yesterday, when you left us together, I tried to get her away from you; but 'Mon Prince,' said she 'you are not handsomer than Rochefide though you are older; you would beat me, and he is like a father to me; show me then the quarter of a good reason for leaving him! I do not love Arthur with the crazy passion I had for the young rogues with patent-leather shoes, whose bills I used to pay; but I love him as a wife loves her husband when she is a decent woman.' And she showed me to the door."

This speech, which had no appearance of exaggeration, had the effect of adding considerably to the state of neglect and shabbiness that disfigured the home of the Rochefides. Ere long Arthur had transplanted his existence and his pleasures to Madame Schontz's lodgings, and found it answer; for by the end of three years he had four hundred thousand francs to invest.

Then began the third phase. Madame Schontz became the kindest of mothers to Arthur's son; she fetched him from school and took him back herself; she loaded him with presents, sweetmeats, and pocket-money; and the child, who adored her, called her his "little mamma." She advised her

Arthur in the management of his money-matters, making him buy consols at the fall before the famous treaty of London, which led to the overthrow of the Ministry on the 1st of March. Arthur made two hundred thousand francs, and Aurélie did not ask for a sou. Rochefide, being a gentleman, invested his six hundred thousand francs in bank bills, half of them in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz.

A small house, rented in the Rue de la Bruyère, was placed in the hands of Grindot, that great architect on a small scale, with instructions to make it a delicious jewel case. Thenceforth Rochefide left everything in the hands of Madame Schontz, who received the dividends and paid the bills. Thus installed in his wife's place, she justified him by making her *Gros Papa* happier than ever. She understood his whims and satisfied them, as Madame de Pompadour humored the fancies of Louis XV. She was, in fact, *maîtresse en titre*—absolute mistress.

She now allowed herself to patronize certain charming young men, artists and literary youths newly born to glory, who disowned the ancients and the moderns alike, and tried to achieve a great reputation by achieving nothing else. Madame Schontz's conduct, a masterwork of tactics, shows her superior intelligence. In the first place, a party of ten or twelve young men amused Arthur, supplied him with witty sayings and shrewd opinions on every subject, and never cast any doubt on the fidelity of the mistress of the house; in the second place, they looked up to her as a highly intellectual woman. These living advertisements, these walking "puffs," reported that Madame Schontz was the most charming woman to be found on the borderland dividing the Thirteenth Arrondissement from the other twelve.

Her rivals, Suzanne Gaillard, who since 1838 had the advantage over her of being a legitimately married wife, Fanny Beaupré, Mariette, and Antonia, spread more than scandalous reports as to the beauty of these youths and the kindness with

which Monsieur de Rochefide welcomed them. Madame Schontz, who could, she declared, give these ladies a start of three bad jokes and beat them, exclaimed one evening, at a supper given by Florine after an opera, when she had set forth to them her good fortune and her success, "Do thou likewise!" a retort which had been remembered against her. At this stage of her career Madame Schontz got the racers sold, in deference to certain considerations, which she owed no doubt to the critical acumen of Claud Vignon, a frequent visitor.

"I could quite understand," said she one day, after lashing the horses with her tongue, "that princes and rich men should take horse-breeding to heart, but for the good of the country and not for the childish satisfaction of a gambler's vanity. If you had stud stables on your estates and could breed a thousand or twelve hundred horses, if each owner sent the best horse in his stable, and if every breeder in France and Navarre should compete every time, it would be a great and fine thing; but you buy a single horse, as the manager of a theatre engages his artists, you reduce an institution to the level of a game, you have a Bourse for legs as you have a Bourse for shares. It is degrading. Would you spend sixty thousand francs to see in the papers—'Monsieur de Rochefide's Lélia beat Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré's Fleur-de Genêt by a length——' Why, you had better give the money to a poet who will hand you down to immortality in verse or in prose, like the late lamented Montyon!"

By dint of such goading the Marquis was brought to see the hollowness of the turf; he saved his sixty thousand francs; and next year Madame Schontz could say to him: "I cost you nothing now, Arthur."

Many rich men envied the Marquis his Aurélie, and tried to win her from him; but, like the Russian prince, they wasted their old age.

"Listen to me, my dear fellow," she had said a fortnight

ago to Finot, now a very rich men, "I know that Rochefide would forgive me for a little flirtation if I really fell in love with another man, but no woman would give up a marquis who is such a thorough good fellow to take up with a parvenu like you. You would never keep me in such a position as Arthur has placed me in. He has made me all but his wife, and half a lady, and you could never do as much for me even if you married me."

This was the last rivet that held the fortunate slave. The speech reached those absent ears for which it was intended.

Thus began the fourth phase, that of habit, the crowning victory of the plan of campaign which enables a woman of this stamp to say of the man, "I have him safe!" Rochefide, who had just bought a pretty house in the name of Mademoiselle Josephine Schiltz, a mere trifle of eighty thousand francs, had, at the time when the Duchess was laying her plans, come to the point when he was vain of his mistress, calling her Ninon II., and boasting of her strict honesty, her excellent manners, her information, and wit. He had concentrated his good and bad qualities, his tastes and pleasures all in Madame Schontz, and had reached that stage of life when from weariness, indifference, or philosophy a man changes no more, but is faithful to his wife or his mistress.

The importance to which Madame Schontz had risen in five years may be understood when it is said that to be introduced to her a man had to be mentioned to her some time in advance. She had refused to make the acquaintance of certain tiresome rich men, and others of fly-blown reputations; she made no exceptions to this strict rule but in the case of certain great aristocratic names.

"They have a right to be stupid," she would say, "because they are swells."

Ostensibly she possessed the three hundred thousand francs that Rochefide had given her, and that a thorough good fellow, a stockbroker named Gobenheim—the only stock-

broker she allowed in her house—managed for her; but she also managed for herself a little private fortune of two hundred thousand francs, formed of her savings on her house allowance for three years, by constantly buying and selling with the three hundred thousand francs, which were all she would ever confess to.

"The more you make, the less you seem to have," Gobenheim remarked one day.

"Water is so dear!" said she.

This unrevealed store was increased by the jewelry and diamonds which Aurélie would wear for a month and then sell, and by money given her for fancies she had forgotten. When she heard herself called rich, Madame Schontz would reply that, at present rates, three hundred thousand francs brought in twelve thousand francs, and that she had spent it all in the hard times of her life when Lousteau had been her lover.

Such method showed a plan; and Madame Schontz, you may be sure, had a plan. For the last two years she had been jealous of Madame du Bruel, and the desire to be married at the mayor's and in church gnawed at her heart. Every social grade has its forbidden fruit, some little thing exaggerated by desire, till it seems as weighty as the globe. This ambition had, of course, its duplicate in the ambition of a second Arthur, whom watchfulness had entirely failed to discover. Bixiou would have it that the favorite was Léon de Lora; the painter believed that it was Bixiou, who was now past forty, and should be thinking of settling. Suspicion also fell on Victor de Vernisset, a young poet of the Canalis school, whose passion for Madame Schontz was a perfect madness; while the poet accused Stidmann, a sculptor, of being his favored rival. This artist, a very good-looking young man, worked for goldsmiths, for bronze dealers, and jewelers; he dreamed of being a Benvenuto Cellini. Claud Vignon, the

young Comte de la Palférine, Gobenheim, Vermanton, a cynic philosopher, and other frequenters of this lively salon were suspected by turns, but all acquitted. No one was a match for Madame Schontz, not even Rochefide, who fancied she had a weakness for la Palférine, a clever youth ; she was, in fact, virtuous in her own interests, and thought only of making a good match.

Only one man of equivocal repute was ever to be seen at Madame Schontz's, and that was Couture, who had more than once been howled at on the Bourse ; but Couture was one of Madame Schontz's oldest friends, and she alone remained faithful to him. The false alarm of 1840 swept away this speculator's last capital ; he had trusted to the 1st of March Ministry ; Aurélie, seeing that luck was against him, made Rochefide play for the other side. It was she who spoke of the last overthrow of this inventor of premiums and joint-stock companies as a *Découture* (unripping a rip).

Couture, delighted to find a knife and fork laid for him at Aurélie's, and getting from Finot—the cleverest or, perhaps, the luckiest of parvenus—a few thousand-franc notes now and then, was the only man shrewd enough to offer his name to Madame Schontz, who studied him to ascertain whether this bold speculator would have strength enough to make a political career for himself, and gratitude enough not to desert his wife. A man of about forty-three years old, and worn for his age, Couture did not redeem the ill-repute of his name by his birth ; he had little to say of his progenitors. Madame Schontz was lamenting the rarity of men of business capacity, when one day Couture himself introduced to her a provincial gentleman who happened to be provided with the two handles by which women hold this sort of pitcher when they mean not to drop it.

A sketch of this personage will be a portrait of a certain type of young man of the day. A digression will, in this case, be history.

In 1838 Fabien du Ronceret, the son of a president of the Chamber at the King's Court of Caen, having lost his father about a year before, came from Alençon, throwing up his appointment as magistrate, in which, as he said, his father had made him waste his time, and settled in Paris. His intention now was to get on in the world by cutting a dash, a Norman scheme somewhat difficult of accomplishment, since he had scarcely eight thousand francs a year, his mother still being alive and enjoying the life-interest of some fine house-property in the heart of Alençon. This youth had already, in the course of various visits to Paris, tried his foot on the tight-rope; he had discerned the weak point of the social stucco restoration of 1830, and meant to work on it for his own profit, following the lead of the sharpers of the middle class. To explain this, we must glance at one of the results of the new state of things.

Modern notions of equality, which in our day have assumed such extravagant proportions, have inevitably developed in private life—in a parallel line with political life—pride, conceit, and vanity, the three grand divisions of the social *I.* Fools wish to pass for clever men, clever men want to be men of talent, men of talent expect to be treated as geniuses: as to the geniuses, they are more reasonable; they consent to be regarded as no more than demi-gods. This tendency of the spirit of the time, which in the Chamber of Deputies makes the manufacturer jealous of the statesman, and the administrator jealous of the poet, prompts fools to run down clever men, clever men to run down men of talent, men of talent to run down those who are a few inches higher than themselves, and the demi-gods to threaten institutions, the throne itself, in short, everything and everybody that does not worship them unconditionally.

As soon as a nation is so impolitic as to overthrow recognized social superiority, it opens the sluice-gates, through which rushes forthwith a torrent of second-rate ambitions, the

least of which would fain be first. According to the democrats, its aristocracy was a disease, but a definite and circumscribed disease; it has exchanged this for ten armed and contending aristocracies, the worst possible state of things. To proclaim the equality of all is to declare the rights of the envious. We are enjoying now the Saturnalia of the Revolution transferred to the apparently peaceful sphere of intelligence, industry, and politics; it seems as though the reputations earned by hard work, good service, and talent were a privilege granted at the expense of the masses. The agrarian law will ere long be extended to the field of glory.

Thus, at no time have men demanded public recognition on more puerile grounds. They must be remarked at any cost for an affectation of devotion to the cause of Poland, to the penitential system, to the future prospects of released convicts, to that of small rogues under or over the age of twelve, to any kind of social quackery. These various manias give rise to spurious dignities—presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of societies, which, in Paris, outnumber the social questions to be solved. Society on a grand scale has been demolished to make way for a thousand small ones in the image of the dead one.

Do not all these parasitical organisms point to decomposition? Are they not the worms swarming in the carcase? All these social bodies are the daughters of one mother—Vanity. Not thus does Catholic charity act, or true benevolence; these study disease while healing its sores, and do not speechify in public on morbid symptoms for the mere pleasure of talking.

Fabien du Ronceret, without being a superior man, had divined, by the exercise of that acquisitive spirit peculiar to the Norman race, all the advantage he might take of this public distemper. Each age has its characteristic, which clever men trade on. Fabien's only aim was to get himself talked about.

"My dear fellow, a man must make his name known if he wants to get on," said he as he left, to du Bousquier, a friend of his father's, and the King of Alençon. "In six months I shall be better known than you."

This was how Fabien interpreted the spirit of his time; he did not rule it, he obeyed it.

He had first appeared in *bohemia*, a district of the moral topography of Paris (see "A Prince of Bohemia"), and was known as "The Heir," in consequence of a certain premeditated parade of extravagance. Du Ronceret had taken advantage of Couture's follies in behalf of pretty Madame Cadine—one of the newer actresses, who was considered extremely clever at the second-class theatres—for whom he had furnished a charming first-floor apartment with a garden, in the Rue Blanche.

This was the way in which the men made acquaintance: The Norman, in search of ready-made luxury, bought the furniture from Couture, with all the decorative fixtures he could not remove from the rooms, a garden-room for smoking in, with a veranda built of rustic woodwork, hung with Indian matting, and decorated with pottery, to get to the smoking-room in rainy weather. When the Heir was complimented on his rooms, he called them his den. The provincial took care not to mention that Grindot the architect had lavished all his art there, as had Stidmann on the carvings, and Léon de Lora on the paintings; for his greatest fault was that form of conceit which goes so far as lying with a view to self-glorification.

The Heir put the finishing touch to this splendor by building a conservatory against a south wall, not because he loved flowers, but because he meant to attack public repute by means of horticulture. At this moment he had almost attained his end. As vice-president of some gardening society, under the presidency of the Duc de Vissembourg, brother of the Prince de Chiavari, the younger son of the late Maréchal Vernon, he

had been able to decorate the vice-presidential coat with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, after an exhibition of horticultural produce, which he opened by an address given out as his own, but purchased of Lousteau for five hundred francs. He was conspicuous by wearing a flower given to him by old Blondet of Alençon, Emile Blondet's father, which he said had bloomed in his conservatory.

But this triumph was nothing. Du Ronceret, who was anxious to pass as a man of superior intelligence, had schemed to ally himself with a set of famous men, to shine by a reflected light, a plan very difficult to carry out on the basis of an income of eight thousand francs. And, in fact, he had looked by turns, but in vain, to Bixiou, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora to introduce him to Madame Schontz, so as to become a member of that menagerie of lions of every degree. Then he dined Couture so often that Couture proved categorically to Madame Schontz that she had to admit such an eccentric specimen, were it only to secure him as one of those graceful unpaid messengers whom house-mistresses are glad to employ on the errands for which servants are unsuited.

By the end of the third evening Madame Schontz knew Fabien through and through, and said to herself, "If Couture does not serve my turn, I am perfectly certain of this man. My future life runs on wheels."

So this simpleton, laughed at by every one, was the man of her choice; but with a deliberate purpose which made the preference an insult, and the choice was never suspected from its utter improbability. Madame Schontz turned Fabien's brain by stolen smiles, by little scenes on the threshold when she saw him out the last, if Monsieur de Rochefide spent the evening there. She constantly invited Fabien to be the third with Arthur in her box at the Italiens or at first-night performances; excusing herself by saying that he had done her this or that service, and that she had no other way of returning it.

Men have a rivalry of conceit among themselves—in common indeed with women—in their desire to be loved for themselves. Hence of all flattering attachments, none is more highly valued than that of a Madame Schontz for the man she makes the object of her heart's affections in contrast with the other kind of love. Such a woman as Madame Schontz, who played at being a fine lady, and who was in truth a very superior woman, was, as she could not fail to be, a subject of pride to Fabien, who fell so desperately in love with her that he never appeared in her presence but in full dress, patent-leather shoes, lemon-colored gloves, an embroidered and frilled shirt, an endless variety of vests; in short, every external symptom of the sincerest adoration.

A month before the conference between the Duchess and the abbé, Madame Schontz had confided the secret of her birth and her real name to Fabien, who could not understand the object of this disclosure. A fortnight later Madame Schontz, puzzled by the Norman's lack of comprehension, exclaimed to herself—

"Good heavens, what an idiot I am! Why, he believes that I am in love with him!"

So then she took him out for a drive in the Bois, in her carriage, for she had had a low phaeton with a pair of horses for a year past.

In the course of this public *tête-à-tête* she discussed the question of her ultimate fate, and explained that she wished to get married.

"I have seven hundred thousand francs," said she; "and I may confess to you that if I could meet with a man of great ambition, who could understand me thoroughly, I would change my condition; for, do you know, the dream of my life is to be a good citizen's wife, connected with a respectable family, and to make my husband and children all very happy."

The Norman was content to be a favorite with Madame Schontz; but to marry her seemed madness beyond discussion

to a bachelor of eight-and-thirty, of whom the revolution of July had made a judge. Seeing his hesitation, Madame Schontz made the Heir a butt for the arrows of her wit, her irony, and her scorn, and turned to Couture. Within a week the speculator, tempted by a hint of her savings, offered her his hand, his heart, and his future prospects—all three of equal value.

Madame Schontz's manœuvres had reached this stage when Madame de Grandlieu began to inquire as to the manners and customs of this Beatrix of the Rue Saint-Georges.

Following the Abbé Brossette's advice, the Duchess begged the Marquis d'Ajuda to bring to her house that prince of political jugglers, the famous Comte de Trailles, the Archduke of bohemia, and the youngest of the young, though he was now fifty. Monsieur d'Ajuda arranged to dine with Maxime at the club in the Rue de Beaune, and proposed that they should go on together to play dummy whist with the Duc de Grandlieu, who, having had an attack of the gout before dinner, would be alone. Though the Duke's son-in-law, the Duchess' cousin, had every right to introduce him into a house where he had never as yet set foot, Maxime de Trailles was under no misapprehension as to the invitation thus conveyed; he concluded that either the Duke or the Duchess wanted to make use of him. A not unimportant feature of the time is the club life, where men gamble with others whom they would never receive in their own houses.

The Duke so far honored Maxime as to confess that he was ill; after fifteen games of whist he went to bed, leaving his wife with Maxime and d'Ajuda. The Duchess, supported by the Marquis, explained her plans to Monsieur de Trailles and asked his assistance, while seeming only to ask his advice. Maxime listened to the end without saying anything decisive, and would not speak till the Duchess had asked him point-blank to help her.

"I quite understand the matter, madame," said he, after giving her one of those looks—keen, astute, and comprehensive—by which these old hands can compromise their allies. "D'Ajuda will tell you that I, if any one in Paris, can manage this double business, without your appearing in it, without its being known even that I have been here this evening. But first of all, we must settle the preliminaries of Léoben. What do you propose to sacrifice for this end?"

"Everything that is required."

"Very good, Madame la Duchesse. Then, as the reward of my services, you will do me the honor of receiving here and giving your countenance to Madame la Comtesse de Trailles?"

"Are you married?" exclaimed d'Ajuda.

"I am going to be married in a fortnight to the only daughter of a wealthy family, but to the last degree middle-class! It is a sacrifice to opinion; I am adopting the strictest principles of my government. I am now casting my old skin.

"So you will understand, Madame la Duchesse, how important for me it would be that you and your family should take up my wife. I am quite certain to be elected deputy when my father-in-law retires from his post, as he intends doing, and I have been promised a diplomatic appointment that befits my new fortune. I cannot see why my wife should not be as well received as Madame de Portenduère in a society of young wives where such stars are to be seen as Mesdames de la Bastie, Georges de Maufrigneuse, de l'Estorade, du Guénic, d'Ajuda, de Restaud, de Rastignac, and de Vandenesse. My wife is pretty, and I will undertake to wake her up.

"Does this meet your views, have you any objections, Madame la Duchesse?

"You are a religious woman; and if you say yes, your promise, which I know will be sacred, will help me immensely

in my changed life. And it will be another good action! Alas, I have long been the chief of a rascally crew; but I want to be quit of all that. After all, our arms are good: Azure, a chimera or, spouting fire, armed gules, scaled vert; a chief counter ermine; granted by Francis I., who thought it desirable to give a patent of nobility to Louis XI.'s groom of the chambers—and we have been counts since the time of Catherine de Medicis."

"I will receive and introduce your wife," replied the Duchess solemnly, "and my family shall never turn its back on her, I give you my word."

"Oh, Madame la Duchesse," exclaimed Maxime, visibly touched, "if Monsieur le Duc will also condescend to treat me kindly, I promise you on my part to make your plan succeed with no great loss to yourself. But," he went on, after a pause, "you must pledge yourself to obey my instructions—— This is the last intrigue of my bachelor life; it must be carried through with all the more care because it is a good action," he said, smiling.

"Obey?" said the Duchess. "But must I appear in all this?"

"Indeed, madame, I will not compromise you," cried Maxime, "and I respect you too implicitly to ask for security. You have only to follow my advice. Thus, for instance, du Guénic must be carried off by his wife like a sacred object, and kept away for two years; she must take him to see Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the more strange and distant lands the better——"

"Ah, that answers a fear expressed by my director," exclaimed the Duchess guilelessly, as she remembered the Abbé Brossette's judicious observation. Maxime and d'Ajuda could not help smiling at the idea of this coincidence of heaven and hell.

"To prevent Madame de Rochefide from ever seeing Calyste again," she added, "we will all travel, Juste and his wife,

Calyste and Sabine, and I. I will leave Clotilde with her father——"

"Do not let us shout 'Victory' just yet, madame," said Maxime. "I foresee immense difficulties; I shall conquer them, no doubt. Your esteem and favor are a prize for which I will plunge through much dirt; but it will be——"

"Dirt!" said the Duchess, interrupting the modern *condottiere* with a face equally expressive of disgust and surprise.

"Ay, and you will have to step in it, madame, since I act for you. Are you really so ignorant of the pitch of blindness to which Madame de Rochefide has brought your son-in-law? I know it, through Nathan and Canalis, between whom she was hesitating when Calyste threw himself into that lioness' maw. Beatrix has made the noble Breton believe that she never loved any one but him, that she is virtuous, that her attachment to Conti was of the head only, and that her heart and the rest had very little to do with it—a musical passion, in short. As to Rochefide, that was a matter of duty.

"So, you understand, she is virginal. And she proves it by forgetting her son; for a year past she has not made the smallest attempt to see him. The little Count is, in point of fact, nearly twelve years old, and he has found a mother in Madame Schontz; motherhood is the mania, as you know, of women of that stamp.

"Du Guénic would be cut in pieces, and let his wife be cut in pieces, for Beatrix. And do you suppose that it is easy to drag a man back from the depths of the abyss of credulity? Why, madame, Shakespeare's Iago would waste all his handkerchiefs in such a task. It is generally imagined that Othello, his younger brother Orosmane, and Saint-Preux, and René, and Werther, and other lovers who are famous, typify love! Their icy-hearted creators never knew what was meant by an absorbing passion, Molière alone had a suspicion of it. Love, Madame la Duchesse, is not an attachment to a noble woman, to a Clarissa; a great achievement that, on my word! Love

is to say to one's self: 'The woman I worship is a wretch; she is deceiving me, she will deceive me again, she is an old hand, she smells of the burning pit!'—and to fly to her, to find the blue of heaven, the flowers of Paradise. That is how Molière loved, and how we love, we scamps and rips; for I can cry at the great scene in 'Arnolphe!' That is how your son-in-law loves Beatrix.

"I shall have some difficulty in getting Rochefide from Madame Schontz; however, Madame Schontz can, no doubt, be got to abet us; I will study her household. As to Calyste and Beatrix, it will need an axe to divide them, treachery of the best quality, infamy so base that your virtuous imagination could not go so low unless your director held your hand. You have asked for the impossible, you shall have it. Still, in spite of my determination to employ the sword and fire, I cannot absolutely pledge myself to success. I know lovers who do not shrink under the most entire disenchantment. You are too virtuous to understand the power of women who have no virtue."

"Do not attempt these infamies till I shall have consulted the Abbé Brossette, to know how far I am involved in them," cried the Duchess, with an artlessness that revealed how selfish religion can be.

"You know nothing about it, my dear mother," said the Marquis d'Ajuda.

On the steps, while waiting for Ajuda's carriage to come up, the Marquis said to Maxime—

"You have frightened our good Duchess."

"But she has no idea of the difficulty of the thing she wants done! Are we going to the Jockey Club? Rochefide must ask me to dine to-morrow at Schontz's rooms; in the course of to-night my plans will be laid, and I shall have chosen the pawns in my chessboard that are to move in the game I mean to play. In the days of her splendor Beatrix would have nothing to say to me; I will settle accounts with her, and

avenge your sister-in-law so cruelly, that perhaps she will think I have overdone it."

On the following day Rochefide told Madame Schontz that Maxime de Trailles was coming to dinner. This was to warn her to display the utmost luxury, and prepare the very best fare for this distinguished connoisseur, who was the terror of every woman of Madame Schontz's class; and she gave as much care to her toilet as to arranging her house in a fitting way to receive the great man.

In Paris there are almost as many royal heads as there are different arts or special sciences, faculties, or professions; the best of those who exercise each has a royal dignity proper to himself; he is revered and respected by his peers, who know the difficulties of his work, and admire unreservedly the man who can defy them. In the eyes of the corps de ballet and courtesans Maxime was an extremely powerful and capable man, for he had succeeded in being immensely loved. He was admired by everybody who knew how hard it is to live in Paris on decent terms with your creditors; and he had never had any rival in elegance, demeanor, and wit but the famous de Marsay, who had employed him on political missions. This is enough to account for his interview with the Duchess, his influence over Madame Schontz, and the authority of his tone in a conference he intended to hold on the Boulevard des Italiens with a young man, who was already famous though recently introduced to the bohemia of Paris.

As he arose next morning, Maxime de Trailles heard Finot announced, to whom he had sent the night before; he begged him to arrange a fortuitous meeting at breakfast at the Café Anglais between Couture, Lousteau, and himself, where they would chat in his hearing. Finot, who was to Maxime de Trailles as a lieutenant in the presence of a marshal of Francé, could refuse him nothing; it was indeed too dangerous to provoke this lion. So when Maxime came in to breakfast, he

found Finot and his two friends at a table; the conversation had already been directed toward the subject of Madame Schontz. Couture, cleverly steered by Finot and Lousteau, who, unknown to himself, was Finot's abettor, let out everything that the Comte de Trailles wanted to know about Madame Schontz.

By one o'clock, Maxime, chewing his toothpick, was talking to du Tillet on the steps of Tortoni's, where speculators form a little Bourse preliminary to real dealings on 'Change. He seemed to be absorbed in business, but he was waiting to see the young Comte de la Palférine, who must pass that way sooner or later. The Boulevard des Italiens is now what the Pont Neuf was in 1650; everybody who is anybody crosses it at least once a day.

In fact, within ten minutes, Maxime took his hand from du Tillet's arm, and, nodding to the young Prince of bohemia, said with a smile, "Two words with you, Count!"

The rivals, one a setting star, the other a rising sun, took their seat on four chairs outside the Café de Paris. Maxime was careful to place himself at a sufficient distance from certain old fogies who, from sheer habit, plant themselves in a row against the wall after one in the afternoon, to dry out their rheumatic pains. He had ample reasons for distrusting these old men. (See "A Man of Business.")

"Have you any debts?" asked Maxime de Trailles of the young man.

"If I had not, should I be worthy to succeed you?" replied la Palférine.

"When I ask you such a question, it is not to cast any doubt on the matter," said de Trailles. "I only want to know if they amount to a respectable sum-total, running into five or six."

"Five or six what?" said la Palférine.

"Six figures! Do you owe 50,000, 100,000? My debts ran up to 600,000 francs."

La Palférine took off his hat with an air of mocking respect.

"If I had credit enough to borrow a hundred thousand francs," replied he, "I would cut my creditors and go to live at Venice in the midst of its masterpieces of painting, spending the evening at the theatre, the night with pretty women, and——"

"At my age where would you be?"

"I should not last so long," replied the young Count.

Maxime returned his rival's civility by just raising his hat with an expression of comical gravity.

"That is another view of life," he replied, as a connoisseur answering a connoisseur. "Then you owe——?"

"Oh, a mere trifle, not worth confessing to an uncle, if I had one. He would disinherit me for such a contemptible sum; six thousand francs."

"Six thousand give one more trouble than a hundred thousand," said Maxime sententiously. "La Palférine, you have a bold wit, you have even more wit than boldness; you may go far and become a political personage. Look here—of all the men who have rushed into the career which I have run, and who have been pitted against me, you are the only one I ever liked."

La Palférine colored, so greatly was he flattered by this confession, made with gracious bluntness, by the greatest of Parisian adventurers. This instinct of vanity was a confession of inferiority which annoyed him; but Maxime understood the reaction easy to foresee in so clever a man, and did his best to correct it at once by placing himself at the young man's discretion.

"Will you do something for me now that I am retiring from the Olympian course by marrying, and marrying well? I would do a good deal for you," he added.

"You make me very proud," said la Palférine; "this is to put the fable of the lion and the mouse into practice."

"In the first place, I will lend you twenty thousand francs," Maxime went on.

"Twenty thousand francs? I knew that if I walked this boulevard long enough——!" said la Palférine in a parenthesis.

"My dear boy, you must set yourself up in some sort of style," said Maxime, smiling. "Do not trot about on your two feet; set up six. Do as I have done; I never got lower than a tilbury——"

"But then you must want me to do something quite beyond my powers."

"No. Only to make a woman fall in love with you within a fortnight."

"A woman of the town?"

"Why?"

"That would be out of the question; but if she is a lady, quite a lady, and very clever——"

"She is a marquise of the first water."

"You want her letters," said the young Count.

"Ah, you are a man after my own heart!" cried Maxime. "No. That is not what is wanted."

"I am really to love her?"

"Yes, really and truly."

"If I am to go beyond æsthetics, it is quite impossible," said la Palférine. "With regard to women, you see, I have a kind of honesty; we may trick them, but not——"

"Then I have not been mistaken," exclaimed Maxime. "Do you suppose I am the man to scheme for some little tu'penny meanness?—— No, you must go, you must dazzle and conquer—— I give you twenty thousand, and ten days to win in. Till this evening at Madame Schontz's."

"I am dining there."

"Good," said Maxime. "By-and-by, when you want me, you will find me, Monsieur le Comte," he added, with the air of a king pledging his word rather than promising.

"The poor woman has done you some terrible mischief then?" asked la Palférine.

"Do not try to sound the depth of my waters, my son; but let me tell you that, if you succeed, you will secure such powerful interest, that when you are tired of your bohemian life you may, like me, retire on the strength of a rich marriage."

"Does a time come, then, when we are tired of amusing ourselves," said la Palférine, "of being nothing, of living as the birds live, of hunting in Paris like wild men, and laughing at all that turns up?"

"We tire of everything, even of hell!" said Maxime with a laugh. "Till this evening."

The two scamps, the old one and the young one, rose. As Maxime got into his one-horse cab, he said to himself—

"Madame d'Espard cannot endure Beatrix; she will help me. To the Hôtel Grandlieu," he cried to the coachman, seeing Rastignac pass. (Find a great man without a weakness.)

Maxime found the Duchess, Madame du Guénic, and Clotilde in tears.

"What has happened?" he asked the Duchess.

"Calyste did not come in—it is the first time, and my poor Sabine is in despair."

"Madame la Duchesse," said Maxime, drawing the pious lady into a window-bay, "in the name of God, who will judge us, do not breathe a word as to my devotion; pledge d'Ajuda to secrecy; never let Calyste know anything of our plots, or we shall fight a duel to the death. When I told you this would not cost you much, I meant that you would not have to spend any monstrous sum. I want about twenty thousand francs, but everything else is my business; you may have to find some good appointments—one receiver-general's, perhaps."

The Duchess and Maxime left the room. When Madame de Grandlieu came back to her two daughters, she heard a

fresh lament from Sabine, full of domestic details, even more heartbreaking than those which had put an end to the young wife's happiness.

"Be calm, my child," said the Duchess to her daughter; "Beatrix will pay dearly for all your tears and misery; she will endure ten humiliations for each one of yours."

Madame Schontz had sent word to Claud Vignon, who had frequently expressed a wish to make the acquaintance of Maxime de Trailles; she invited Couture, Fabien, Bixiou, Léon de Lora, la Palférine, and Nathan, whom Rochefide begged to have for Maxime's benefit. Thus she had a party of nine, all of the first water, excepting du Ronceret; but the Heir's Norman vanity and brutality were a match for Claud Vignon's literary force, for Nathan's poetry, la Palférine's acumen, Couture's keen eye to the main chance, Bixiou's wit, Finot's foresight, Maxime's depth, and Léon de Lora's genius.

Madame Schontz, who aimed at appearing young and handsome, fortified herself in such a toilet as women of that class alone can achieve—a point-lace cape of spider-web fineness; a blue velvet dress, of which the elegant bodice was buttoned with opals; her hair in smooth bands and shining like ebony. Madame Schontz owed her fame as a beauty to the brilliancy and color of a warm, creamy complexion like a creole's, a face full of original details, with the clean-cut, firm features —of which the Comtesse de Merlin was the most famous example and the most perennially young—peculiar perhaps to southern faces. Unluckily, since her life had been so calm, so easy, little Madame Schontz had grown decidedly fat. Her neck and shoulders, bewitchingly round, were getting coarse. Still, in France a woman's face is thought all-important, and a fine head will secure a long life to an ungraceful shape.

"My dear child," said Maxime as he came in and kissed

Aurélie on the forehead, "Rochefide wanted me to see your home, where I have not yet been; it is almost worthy of his income of four hundred thousand francs. Well, he had less by fifty thousand a year when he first knew you; in less than five years you have gained for him as much as any other woman — Antonia, Malaga, Cadine, or Florentine—would have devoured."

"I am not a baggage—I am an artist!" said Madame Schontz, with some dignity. "I hope to end by founding a family of respectable folk, as they say in the play."

"It is dreadful, we all getting married," said Maxime, dropping into a chair by the fire. "Here am I within a few days of making a Comtesse Maxime."

"Oh! how I should like to see her!" cried Madame Schontz. "But allow me," she went on, "to introduce Monsieur Claud Vignon—Monsieur Claud Vignon, Monsieur de Trailles."

"Ah, it was you who let Camille Maupin—mine hostess of literature—go into a convent?" cried Maxime. "After you, God! No one ever did me so much honor. Mademoiselle des Touches made a Louis XIV. of you, monsieur."

"And this is how history is written!" said Claud Vignon. "Did you not know that her fortune was spent in releasing Monsieur du Guénic's estates? If she knew that Calyste had fallen into the arms of her ex-friend!——" (Maxime kicked the critic's foot, looking at Monsieur de Rochefide) "on my word, I believe she would come out of her nunnery to snatch him from her."

"I declare, my dear Rochefide," said Maxime, finding that his warning had failed to check Claud Vignon, "in your place I would give my wife her fortune, that the world might not suppose that she had taken up Calyste du Guénic for want of money."

"Maxime is right!" said Madame Schontz, looking at Arthur, who colored violently. "If I have saved you some thousand francs to invest, you could not spend them better.

I should have secured the happiness of both husband and wife. What a good-conduct stripe!"

"I never thought of it," replied the Marquis. Then, after a pause, "But it is true; one is a gentleman first, and a husband after."

"Let me advise you of the appropriate moment for your generosity," said Maxime.

"Arthur," said Aurélie, "Maxime is right. Our generous actions, you see, old boy, must be done as Couture's shares must be sold," and she looked in the glass to see who was coming in, "in the nick of time."

Couture was followed by Finot, and in a few minutes all the guests were assembled in the handsome blue-and-gold drawing-room of the "Hôtel Schontz," as the men called their place of meeting since Rochefide had bought it for his Ninon II. On seeing la Palférine come in the last, Maxime went up to him, drew him into a recess, and gave him the twenty bank-notes.

"Above all, do not be stingy with them," said he, with the native grace of a spendthrift.

"No one knows so well as you how to double the value of what appears to be a gift," replied la Palférine.

"Then you agree?"

"Well, since I take the money!" replied the youth, with some pride and irony.

"Very well. Nathan, who is here, will take you within two days to call on the Marquise de Rochefide," said Maxime in his ear.

La Palférine jumped as he heard the name.

"Do not fail to declare yourself madly in love with her; and, to arouse no suspicions, drink—wine, liqueurs no end! I will tell Aurélie to put you next to Nathan. Only, my son, we must now meet every night on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, at one in the morning; you to report progress, and I to give you instructions."

"I will be there, master," said the young Count, with a bow.

"What makes you ask a fellow to dine with us who comes dressed like a waiter?" said Maxime to Madame Schontz in a whisper and looking at du Ronceret.

"Have you never seen 'The Heir?' Du Ronceret, from Alençon."

"Monsieur," said Maxime to Fabien, "you must know my friend d'Esgrignon?"

"Victorien dropped the acquaintance long since," replied Fabien; "but we were very intimate as boys."

The dinner was such as can only be given in Paris, and in the houses of these perfectly reckless women, for their refined luxury amazes the most fastidious. It was at a supper of this kind, given by a rich and handsome courtesan like Madame Schontz, that Paganini declared that he had never eaten such food at the table of any sovereign, nor drunk such wine in any prince's house, nor heard such witty conversation, nor seen such attractive and tasteful magnificence.

Maxime and Madame Schontz were the first to return to the drawing-room, at about ten o'clock, leaving the other guests, who had ceased to veil their anecdotes, and who boasted of their powers, with sticky lips glued to liqueur-glasses that they could not empty.

"Well, pretty one," said Maxime, "you are quite right. Yes, I came to get something out of you. It is a serious matter; you must give up Arthur. But I will see that he gives you two hundred thousand francs."

"And why am I to give him up, poor old boy?"

"To marry that noodle who came from Alençon on purpose. He has already been a judge; I will get him made president of the court in the place of old Blondet, who is nearly eighty-two, and, if you know how to catch the wind, your husband will be elected deputy. You will be people of importance, and crush Madame la Comtesse du Bruel——"

"Never!" cried the wily Madame Schontz; "she is a countess."

"Is he of the stuff they make counts of?"

"Well, he has a coat-of-arms," said Aurélie, seeking a letter in a handsome bag that hung by the fireplace and handing it to Maxime. "What does it all mean? There are combs on it."

"He bears: Quarterly, the first argent three combs gules, second and third three bunches of grapes with stems and leaves all proper, fourth azure four pens or, laid in fret. Motto, *Servir*, and a squire's helmet. No great things! They were granted by Louis XV. They must have had some haberdasher grandfather, the maternal ancestry made money in wine, and the du Ronceret who got the arms must have been a registrar. But if you succeed in throwing off Arthur, the du Roncerets shall be Barons at least, I promise you, my pretty pigeon. You see, child, you must lie in pickle for five or six years in the country if you want to bury la Schontz in Madame la Présidente. The rascal cast eyes at you, of which the meaning was quite clear; you have hooked him."

"No," said Aurélie. "When I offered him my hand, he was as quiet as brandy is in the market."

"I will make up his mind for him if he is tipsy. Go and see how they are all getting on."

"It is not worth the trouble of going. I hear no one but Bixiou giving one of his caricatures, to which nobody is listening; but I know my Arthur; he thinks it necessary to be polite to Bixiou, and he is staring at him still, even if his eyes are shut."

"Let us go back then."

"By-the-by, for whose benefit am I doing all this, Maxime?" said Madame Schontz suddenly.

"For Madame de Rochefide," replied Maxime bluntly. "It is impossible to patch up matters between her and Arthur so long as you keep hold of him. To her it is a matter of

being at the head of her house and having four hundred thousand francs a year."

"And she only offers me two hundred thousand francs down? I will have three hundred thousand if she is at the bottom of it. What, I have taken every care of her brat and her husband, I have filled her place in every way, and she is to beat me down? Look here, my dear fellow, I shall then have just a million. And beside that, you promise me the presidency of the court at Alençon if only I can make up for Madame du Ronceret——"

"Right you are!" said Maxime.

"How I shall be bored in that little town!" said Aurélie philosophically. "I have heard so much about that part of the country from d'Esgrignon and Madame Val-Noble that it is as though I had lived there already."

"But if I could promise you the help of the title?"

"Oh, Maxime, if you can really do that. Ay, but the pigeon refuses to fly——"

"And he is very ugly, with his skin like a plum; he has bristles instead of whiskers, and looks like a wild boar, though he has eyes like a bird of prey. He will be the finest president ever seen. Be easy! In ten minutes he will be singing you Isabelle's song in the fourth act of 'Robert le Diable,' '*Je suis à tes genoux*' (I am at thy knees). But you must undertake to send Arthur back to fall at Beatrix's feet."

"It is difficult, but among us we may manage it."

At about half-past ten the gentlemen came into the drawing-room to take coffee. In the position in which Madame Schontz, Couture, and du Ronceret found themselves, it is easy to imagine the effect that was produced on the ambitious Norman by the following conversation between Couture and Maxime in a corner, carried on indeed in an undertone that they might not be overheard, but which Fabien contrived to hear.

"My dear fellow, if you were wise, you would accept the place

of receiver-general in some out-of-the-way place; Madame de Rochefide would get it for you. Aurélie's million francs would enable you to deposit the security, and you would settle everything on her as your wife. Then, if you steered your boat cleverly, you would be made deputy, and the only premium I ask for having saved you will be your vote in the Chamber."

"I shall always be proud to serve under you."

"Oh, my boy, you have had a very close shave! Just fancy, Aurélie thought herself in love with that Norman from Alençon; she wanted to have him made a baron, president of the court in his native town, and officer of the Legion of Honor. The noodle never guessed what Madame Schontz was worth, and you owe your good fortune to her disgust; so do not give such a clever woman time to change her mind. For my part, I will go and put the irons in the fire."

So Maxime left Couture in the seventh heaven of happiness, and said to la Palférine, "Shall I take you with me, my son?"

By eleven o'clock Aurélie found herself left with Couture, Fabien, and Rochefide. Arthur was asleep in an armchair; Couture and Fabien were trying to outstay each other, but without success. Madame Schontz put an end to this contest by saying to Couture, "Till to-morrow, dear boy!" which he took in good part.

"Mademoiselle," said Fabien, in a low voice, "when you saw me so unready to respond to the proposal you made me indirectly, do not imagine that there was the smallest hesitation on my part; but you do not know my mother; she would never consent to my happiness——"

"You are of age to address her with a *sommation respectueuse*,* my dear fellow," retorted Aurélie quite insolently. "However, if you are afraid of mamma, you are not the man for my money."

*A legal form by which French sons can reduce the obstinacy of recalcitrant parents when they refuse their consent to a marriage.

"Joséphine!" said the Heir affectionately, as he boldly put his right arm around Madame Schontz's waist, "I believed that you loved me."

"And what then?"

"I might perhaps pacify my mother, and gain more than her consent."

"How?"

"If you would use your influence——"

"To get you created baron, officer of the Legion of Honor, and president of the court, my boy—is that it? Listen to me, I have done so many things in the course of my life that I am capable of being virtuous! I could be an honest woman, a loyal wife, and take my husband in tow to upper regions; but I insist on being so loved by him that not a glance, not a thought, shall ever be given to any heart but mine, not even in a wish—— How does that do for you? Do not bind yourself rashly; it is for life, my boy."

"With a woman like you, done, without looking twice!" cried Fabien, as much intoxicated by a look as he was by the West Indian liqueurs.

"You shall never repent of that word, my brave boy; you shall be a peer of France. As to that poor old chap," she went on, looking at Rochefide asleep, "it is a, double l, all, o-v-e-r, ver—all over!"

She said it so cleverly and so prettily that Fabien seized Madame Schontz and kissed her with an impulse of passion and joy, in which the intoxication of love and wine were second to that of happiness and ambition.

"But now, my dear child," said she, "you must remember henceforth to behave respectfully to your wife, not to play the lover, and to leave me to get out of my slough as decently as may be. And Couture, who believed himself a rich man and receiver-general!——"

"I have a horror of the man," said Fabien. "I wish I might never see him again!"

"I will have him here no more," said the courtesan with a little prudish air. "Now that we understand each other, my Fabien, go; it is one o'clock."

This little scene gave rise in the Schontz household, hitherto so perfectly happy, to a phase of domestic warfare between Arthur and Aurélie, such as any covert interest on the part of one of the partners is certain to give rise to.

The very next day Arthur woke to find himself alone; Madame Schontz was cold, as women of that sort know how to be.

"What happened last night?" asked he at breakfast, looking at Aurélie.

"That is the way of it in Paris," said she. "You go to bed on a wet night, next morning the pavement is dry, and everything so frozen that the dust flies; would you like a brush?"

"But what ails you, dear little woman?"

"Go, go to your great gawk of a wife!"

"My wife?" cried the unhappy Marquis.

"Couldn't I guess why you brought Maxime here? You wanted to make it up with Madame de Rochefide, who wants you perhaps for some tell-tale baby. And I, whom you think so cunning, was advising you to give her back her money! Oh, I know your tricks. After five years my gentleman is tired of me. I am fat, Beatrix is bony; it will be a change. You are not the first man I have known with a taste for skeletons. Your Beatrix dresses well, too, and you are one of the men who like a clotheshorse. Beside, you want to send Monsieur de Guénic packing! That would be a triumph! How well it will look! Won't it be talked about! You will be quite a hero!"

At two o'clock Madame Schontz had not come to an end of her ironical banter, in spite of Arthur's protestations. She said she was engaged to dine out. She desired the "faithless one" to go without her to the Italiens; she was going to a

first-night performance at the Ambigu-Comique, and to make the acquaintance of a charming woman, Lousteau's mistress, Madame de la Baudraye.

To prove his eternal attachment to his little Aurélie and his aversion for his wife, Arthur offered to set out the very next day for Italy and to live as her husband in Rome, Naples, or Florence, whichever Aurélie might prefer, giving her sixty thousand francs a year.

"All that is pure whims," said she. "That will not hinder your making it up with your wife, and you will be wise to do so."

At the end of this formidable discussion, Arthur and Aurélie parted, he to play and dine at the club, she to dress and spend the evening *tête-à-tête* with Fabien.

Monsieur de Rochefide found Maxime at the club, and poured out his complaints, as a man who felt happiness being torn up from his heart by the roots that clung by every fibre. Maxime listened to the Marquise's lament as polite people can listen while thinking of something else.

"I am a capital counselor in such cases, my dear fellow," said he. "Well, you make a great mistake in letting Aurélie see how much you care for her. Let me introduce you to Madame Antonia—a heart to let. You will see la Schontz sing very small. Why, she is seven-and-thirty, is your Schontz, and Antonia is but twenty-six! And such a woman! Her wits are not all in her brains, I can tell you. Indeed, she is my pupil. If Madame Schontz still struts out her pride, do you know what it means?"

"On my honor, no."

"That she means to get married; and then nothing can hinder her from throwing you over. After a six years' lease the woman has a right to do it. But if you will listen to me, you can do better than that. At the present time your wife is worth a thousand Schontzes and Antonias of the Saint-Georges quarter. She will be hard to win, but not impos-

sible; and she will make you as happy as Orgon! At any rate, if you do not wish to look like a fool, come to supper to-night at Antonia's."

"No, I love Aurélie too well; I will not allow her to have any cause for blaming me."

"Oh, my dear fellow! what a life you are making for yourself!" cried Maxime.

"It is eleven o'clock. She will have returned from the Ambigu," said Rochefide, going off. And he roared at the coachman to drive as fast as he could to the Rue de la Bruyère.

Madame Schontz had given distinct orders, and monsieur was admitted exactly as though he and madame were the best of friends; but madame, informed of monsieur's return, took care to let monsieur hear the slam of her dressing-room door, shut as doors are shut when a lady is taken by surprise. Then, on the corner of the piano was Fabien's hat, intentionally forgotten, and conspicuously fetched away by the maid as soon as monsieur and madame were engaged in conversation.

"So you did not go to the play, little woman?"

"No, I changed my mind."

"And who has been here?" he asked quite simply, seeing the maid carry away the hat.

"Nobody."

To this audacious falsehood Arthur could only bow his head; this was passing under the Caudine forks of submission. True love has this magnanimous cowardice. Arthur behaved to Madame Schontz as Sabine did to Calyste, as Calyste did to Beatrix.

Within a week there was a change like that of a grub to a butterfly in the handsome and clever young Count, Charles-Édouard Rusticoli de la Palférine (the hero of the sketch called "A Prince of Bohemia," which makes it unnecessary to describe his person and character in this place). Hitherto

he had lived very poorly, making up his deficits with the audacity of a Danton; now he paid his debts, by Maxime's advice he had a little low carriage, he was elected to the Jockey-Club, to the club in the Rue de Grammont, he became superlatively elegant. Finally, he published in the "Journal des Débats" a novel which earned him in a few days such a reputation as professional writers do not achieve after many years of labor and success, for in Paris nothing is so vehement as what is to prove ephemeral. Nathan, perfectly certain that the Count would never write anything more, praised this elegant and impertinent youth to Madame de Rochefide in such terms that Beatrix, spurred on by the poet's account of him, expressed a wish to see this prince of fashionable vagabonds.

"He will be all the more delighted to come here," replied Nathan, "because I know he is so much in love with you as to commit any folly."

"But he has committed every folly already, I am told," said Beatrix.

"Every folly? No," replied Nathan, "he has not yet been so foolish as to love a decent woman."

A few days after the plot of the boulevard had been laid between Maxime and the seductive Count Charles-Édouard, this young gentleman, on whom nature had bestowed—in irony, no doubt—a pathetically melancholy countenance, made his first incursion into the nest in the Rue de Courcelles, where the dove, to receive him, fixed an evening when Calyste was obliged to go out with his wife. If ever you meet la Palférine—or when you come to the "Prince of Bohemia" in the third part of this long picture of modern manners—you will at once understand the triumph achieved in a single evening by that sparkling wit, those astonishing high spirits, especially if you can conceive of the capital by-play of the sponsor who agreed to second him on this occasion. Nathan was a good fellow; he showed off the young Count as a jeweler

shows off a necklace he wants to sell, by making the stones sparkle in the light.

La Palférine discreetly was the first to leave; he left Nathan and the Marquise together, trusting to the great author's coöperation, which was admirable. Seeing the Marquise quite amazed, he fired her fancy by a certain reticence, which stirred in her such chords of curiosity as she did not know existed in her. Nathan gave her to understand that it was not so much la Palférine's wit that won him his successes with women as his superior gifts in the art of love; and he cried him up beyond measure.

This is the place for setting forth a novel result of the great law of contrasts, which gives rise to many a crisis in the human heart, and accounts for so many vagaries that we are forced to refer to it sometimes, as well as to the law of affinities. Courtesans—including all that portion of the female sex which is named, unnamed, and renamed every quarter of a century—all preserve, in the depths of their hearts, a vigorous wish to recover their liberty, to feel a pure, saintly, and heroic love for some man to whom they can sacrifice everything. (See "A Harlot's Progress.") They feel this antithetical need so keenly, that it is rare to find a woman of the kind who has not many times aspired to become virtuous through love. The most frightful deception cannot discourage them. Women who are, on the contrary, restrained by education, and by their rank in life, fettered by the dignity of their family, living in the midst of wealth, crowned by a halo of virtue, are tempted—secretly, of course—to try the tropical regions of passion. These two antagonistic types of women have, at the bottom of their hearts, the one a little craving for virtue, the other a little craving for dissipation, which Jean-Jacques Rousseau first had the courage to point out. In those it is the last gleam of the divine light not yet extinct; in these it is a trace of the primitive clay.

This remaining claw of the beast was tickled, this hair of

the devil was pulled with the greatest skill, by Nathan. The Marquise seriously wondered whether she had not hitherto been the dupe of her intellect, whether her education was complete. Vice!—is perhaps the desire to know everything.

Next day Calyste was seen by Beatrix as what he was—a perfect and loyal gentleman, devoid of spirit and wit.

In Paris, to be known as a wit, a man's wit must flow as water flows from a spring; for all men of fashion, and Parisians in general, are witty. But Calyste was too much in love, he was too much absorbed to observe the change in Beatrix, and satisfy her by opening up fresh veins; he was very colorless in the reflected light of the previous evening and could not give the greedy Beatrix the smallest excitement. A great love is a credit account open to such voracious drafts on it that the moment of bankruptcy is inevitable.

In spite of the weariness of this day—the day when a woman is bored by her lover!—Beatrix shuddered with fears as she thought of a duel between la Palférine, the successor of Maxime de Trailles, and Calyste du Guénic, a brave man without brag. She therefore hesitated to see the young Count any more; but the knot was cut by a simple incident. Beatrix had a third share in a box at the Italiens—a dark box on the pit tier where she might not be seen. For some few days Calyste had been so bold as to accompany the Marquise and sit behind her, timing their arrival late enough to attract no attention. Beatrix was always one of the first to leave before the end of the last act, and Calyste escorted her, keeping an eye on her, though old Antoine was, as usual, in waiting on his mistress.

Maxime and la Palférine studied these tactics, dictated by the proprieties, by the love of concealment characteristic of the "Eternal Baby," and also by a dread that weighs on every woman who, having once been a constellation of fashion, has fallen for love from her rank in the zodiac. She then fears humiliation as a worse agony than death; but this agony

of pride, this shipwreck, which women who have kept their place on Olympus inflict on those who have fallen, came upon her, by Maxime's contriving, under the most horrible circumstances.

At a performance of "Lucia," which ended, as is well known, by one of Rubini's greatest triumphs, Madame de Rochefide, before she was called by Antoine, came out from the corridor into the vestibule of the theatre, where the stairs were crowded with pretty women, grouped on the steps, or standing in knots till their servants should bring up their carriages. Beatrix was at once recognized by all; a whisper ran through every group, rising to a murmur. In the twinkling of an eye every woman vanished; the Marquise was left alone as if plague-stricken. Calyste, seeing his wife on one of the staircases, dared not join the outcast, and it was in vain that Beatrix twice gave him a tearful look, an entreaty to come to her support. At that moment la Palférine, elegant, lordly, and charming, quitted two other women, and came, with a bow, to talk to the Marquise.

"Take my arm and come defiantly with me; I can find your carriage," said he.

"Will you finish the evening with me?" she replied, as she got into her carriage and made room for him by her side.

La Palférine said to his groom, "Follow madame's carriage," and got in with Madame de Rochefide, to Calyste's amazement. He was left standing, planted on his feet as though they were made of lead, for it was on seeing him looking pale and blank that Beatrix had invited the young Count to accompany her. Every dove is a Robespierre in white feathers.

Three carriages arrived together at the Rue de Courcelles with lightning swiftness—Calyste's, la Palférine's, and the Marquise's.

"So you are here?" said Beatrix, on going into her drawing-room leaning on the young Count's arm, and finding

Calyste already there, his horse having out-distanced the other two carriages.

"So you are acquainted with this gentleman!" said Calyste to Beatrix with suppressed fury.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Palférine was introduced to me by Nathan ten days ago," said Beatrix; "and you, monsieur, have known me for four years——"

"And I am ready, madame," said la Palférine, "to make Madame d'Espard repent of having been the first to turn her back on you—down to her grandchildren——"

"Oh, it was *she*!" cried Beatrix. "I will pay her out."

"If you want to be revenged, you must win back your husband, but I am prepared to bring him back to you," said la Palférine in her ear.

The conversation thus begun was carried on until two in the morning, without giving Calyste an opportunity of speaking two words apart to Beatrix, who constantly kept his rage in subjection by her glances. La Palférine, who was not in love with her, was as superior in good taste, wit, and charm as Calyste was beneath himself; writhing on his seat like a worm cut in two, and thrice starting to his feet with an impulse to stop la Palférine. The third time that Calyste flew at his rival, the Count said, "Are you in pain, monsieur?" in a tone that made Calyste sit down on the nearest chair, and remain as immovable as an image.

The Marquise chatted with the light ease of a Célimène, ignoring Calyste's presence. La Palférine was so supremely clever as to depart on a last witty speech, leaving the two lovers at war.

Thus, by Maxime's skill, the flames of discord were raging in the divided households of Monsieur and Madame de Rochefide.

On the morrow, having heard from la Palférine, at the Jockey-Club, where the young Count was playing whist with great profit, of the success of the scene he had plotted, Maxime

went to the Hôtel Schontz to ascertain how Aurélie was managing her affairs.

"My dear fellow," cried Madame Schontz, laughing as she saw him, "I am at my wits' end. I am closing my career with the discovery that it is a misfortune to be clever."

"Explain your meaning."

"In the first place, my dear friend, I kept my Arthur for a week on a regimen of kicking his shins, with the most patriotic old stories and the most unpleasant discipline known in our profession. 'You are ill,' said he with fatherly mildness, 'for I have never been anything but kind to you, and I perfectly adore you.' 'You have one fault, my dear,' said I; 'you bore me.' 'Well, but have you not all the cleverest men and the handsomest young fellows in Paris to amuse you?' said the poor man. I was shut up. Then I felt that I loved him."

"Hah!" said Maxime.

"What is to be done? These ways are too much for us; it is impossible to resist them. Then I changed the stop; I made eyes at that wild boar of a lawyer, my future husband, as great a sheep now as Arthur; I made him sit there in Rochefide's armchair, and I thought him a perfect fool. How bored I was! But, of course, I had to keep Fabien there that we might be discovered together——"

"Well," cried Maxime, "get on with your story! When Rochefide found you together, what next?"

"You would never guess, my good fellow. By your instructions the banns are published, the marriage-contract is being drawn, Notre-Dame de Lorette is out of court. When it is a case of matrimony, something may be paid on account. When he found us together, Fabien and me, poor Arthur stole off on tiptoe to the dining-room, and began growling and clearing his throat and knocking the chairs about. That great gaby Fabien, to whom I cannot tell everything, was frightened, and that, my dear Maxime, is the point we have

reached. Why, if Arthur should find the couple of us some morning on coming into my room, he is capable of saying, 'Have you had a pleasant night, children?'"

Maxime nodded his head, and for some minutes sat twirling his cane.

"I know the sort of man," said he. "This is what you must do; there is no help for it but to throw Arthur out the window and keep the door tightly shut. You must begin again the same scene with Fabien——"

"How intolerable! For, after all, you see, the sacrament has not yet blessed me with virtue——"

"You must contrive to catch Arthur's eye when he finds you together," Maxime went on; "if he gets angry, there is an end of the matter. If he only growls as before, there is yet more an end of it."

"How?"

"Well, you must be angry; you must say, 'I thought you loved and valued me; but you have ceased to care for me; you feel no jealousy——' but you know it all, chapter and verse. 'Under such circumstances Maxime' (drag me in) 'would kill his man on the spot' (and cry). 'And Fabien' (make him ashamed of himself by comparing him with Fabien) —'Fabien would have a dagger ready to stab you to the heart. That is what I call love! There, go! Good-night, good-by! Take back your house; I am going to marry Fabien. He will give me his name, he will! He has thrown over his old mother!' In short, you——"

"Of course, of course! I will be magnificent!" cried Madame Schontz. "Ah, Maxime! There will never be but one Maxime, as there never was but one de Marsay."

"La Palférine is greater than I," said de Trailles modestly. "He is getting on famously."

"He has a tongue, but you have backbone and a grip. How many people you have kept going! How many you have doubled up!"

"La Palférine has every qualification; he is deep and well informed, while I am ignorant," replied Maxime. "I have seen Rastignac, who came to terms at once with the keeper of the seals. Fabien will be made president of the court and officer of the Legion of Honor after a year's probation."

"I will take up religion," replied Madame Schontz, emphasizing the phrase so as to win an approving look from Maxime.

"Priests are worth a hundred of us!" said Maxime.

"Really?" said Aurélie. "Then I may find some one to talk to in a country town. I have begun my part. Fabien has already told his mother that grace has dawned on me, and he has bewitched the good woman with my million and his presidency; she agrees that we are to live with her; she asked for a portrait of me and has sent me hers; if Love were to look at it, he would fall backward. Go then, Maxime; I will demolish the poor man this evening. It goes to my heart."

Two days later la Palférine and Maxime met at the door of the Jockey-Club.

"It is done," said Charles-Édouard.

The words, containing a whole horrible and terrible drama, such as vengeance often carries out, made the Comte de Trailles smile.

"We shall have all de Rochefide's jeremiads," said Maxime, "for you and Aurélie have finished together. Aurélie has turned Arthur out of doors, and now we must get hold of him. He is to give three hundred thousand francs to Madame du Ronceret and return to his wife. We will prove to him that Beatrix is superior to Aurélie."

"We have at least ten days before us," said Charles-Édouard sapiently, "and not too much in all conscience; for now I know the Marquise, and the poor man will be handsomely fleeced."

"What will you do when the bomb bursts?" asked Maxime de Trailles.

"We can always be clever when we have time to think it out; I am grand when I am able to prepare for it."

The two gamblers went into the drawing-room together, and found the Marquis de Rochefide looking two years older; he had no stays on; he had sacrificed his elegance; his beard had grown.

"Well, my dear Marquis?" said Maxime.

"Oh, my dear fellow, my life is broken——" and for ten minutes Arthur talked and Maxime gravely listened; he was thinking of his marriage, which was to take place a week hence.

"My dear Arthur, I advised you of the only means I knew of to keep Aurélie, and you did not choose——"

"What means?"

"Did I not advise you to go to supper with Antonia?"

"Quite true. How can I help it? I love her. And you, you make love as Grisier fences."

"Listen to me, Arthur; give her three hundred thousand francs for her little house, and I promise you I will find you something better. I will speak to you again of the unknown fair one by-and-by; I see d'Ajuda, who wants to say two words to me."

And Maxime left the inconsolable man to talk to the representative of the family needing consolation.

"My dear fellow," said the other Marquis in an undertone, "the Duchess is in despair; Calyste has quietly packed up and procured a passport. Sabine wants to follow the fugitives, catch Beatrix, and claw her. She is expecting another child; and the whole thing looks rather murderous, for she has gone quite openly and bought pistols."

"Tell the Duchess that Madame de Rochefide is not going, and within a fortnight the whole thing will be settled. Now, your hand on it, d'Ajuda. Neither you nor I have said any-

thing or known anything. We shall admire the effects of chance."

"The Duchess has already made me swear secrecy on the Gospels and the cross."

"You will receive my wife a month hence?"

"With pleasure."

"Everybody will be satisfied," replied Maxime. "Only warn the Duchess that something is about to happen which will delay her departure for Italy for six weeks; it concerns Monsieur du Guénic. You will know all about it later."

"What is it?" asked d'Ajuda, who was looking at la Palférine.

"Socrates said before his death, 'We owe a cock to Æsculapius.' But your brother-in-law will be let off for the comb," replied la Palférine without hesitation.

For ten days Calyste endured the burden of a woman's anger, all the more implacable because it was seconded by a real passion. Beatrix felt that form of love so roughly but truly described to the Duchess by Maxime de Trailles. Perhaps there is no highly organized being that does not experience this overwhelming passion once in a lifetime. The Marquise felt herself quelled by a superior force, by a young man who was not impressed by her rank, who, being of as noble birth as herself, could look at her with a calm and powerful eye, and from whom her greatest feminine efforts could scarcely extract a smile of admiration. Finally, she was crushed by a tyrant, who always left her bathed in tears, deeply hurt, and believing herself wronged. Charles-Édouard played the same farce on Madame de Rochefide that she had been playing these six months on Calyste.

Since the scene of her mortification at the Italiens, Beatrix had adhered to one formula—

"You preferred the world and your wife to me, so you do not love me. If you wish to prove that you do love me, sacrifice your wife and the world. Give up Sabine, leave

her, and let us go to live in Switzerland, in Italy, or in Germany."

Justifying herself by this cool ultimatum, she had established the sort of blockade which women carry into effect by cold looks, scornful shrugs, and a face like a stone citadel. She believed herself rid of Calyste; she thought he would never venture on a breach with the Grandlieus. To give up Sabine, to whom Mademoiselle des Touches had given her fortune, meant poverty for him.

However, Calyste, mad with despair, had secretly procured a passport, and begged his mother to forward him a considerable sum. While waiting for the money to reach him, he kept watch over Beatrix, himself a victim to the jealousy of a Breton. At last, nine days after the fateful communication made by la Palférine to Maxime at the club, the Baron, to whom his mother had sent thirty thousand francs, flew to the Rue de Courcelles, determined to force the blockade, to turn out la Palférine, and to leave Paris with his idol appeased.

This was one of those fearful alternatives when a woman who has preserved a fragment of self-respect may sink for ever into the depths of vice, but may, on the other hand, return to virtue. Hitherto Madame de Rochefide had regarded herself as a virtuous woman, whose heart had been invaded by two passions; but to love Charles-Édouard, and allow herself to be loved by Calyste, would wreck her self-esteem; for where falsehood begins, infamy begins. She had granted rights to Calyste, and no human power could hinder the Breton from throwing himself at her feet and watering them with the tears of abject repentance. Many persons wonder to see the icy insensibility under which women smother their passions; but if they could not thus blot out the past, life for them would be bereft of dignity; they could never escape from the inevitable collusion to which they had once succumbed.

In her entirely new position Beatrix would have been saved if la Palférine had come to her; but old Antoine's alertness was her ruin.

On hearing a carriage stop at the door, she exclaimed to Calyste, "Here are visitors!" and she hurried away to prevent a castastrophe.

Antoine, a prudent man, replied to Charles-Édouard, who had called solely to hear these very words, "Madame is gone out."

When Beatrix heard from the old servant that the young Count had called, and what he had been told, she said, "Quite right," and returned to the drawing-room, saying to herself, "I will be a nun!"

Calyste, who had made so bold as to open the window, caught sight of his rival.

"Who was it?" he asked.

"I do not know; Antoine has not come up yet."

"It was la Palférine——"

"Very possibly."

"You love him, and that is why you find fault with me. I saw him!"

"You saw him?"

"I opened the window."

Beatrix dropped half-dead on the sofa. Then she tried to temporize to save the future; she put off their departure for ten days on the plea of business, and vowed to herself that she would close her door against Calyste if only she could pacify la Palférine, for these are the terrible consequences, the horrible compromises and burning torments that underlie lives that have gone off the rails on which the great train of society runs.

As soon as Beatrix was alone she felt so miserable, so deeply humiliated, that she went to bed; she was ill; that fearful struggle that rent her heart seemed to leave a horrible reaction, and she sent for the doctor; but at the same time she

dispatched to la Palférine the following note, in which she avenged herself on Calyste with a sort of frenzy:

"Come to see me, my friend, I am in desperation. Antoine turned you away when your visit would have put an end to one of the most horrible nightmares of my life by rescuing me from a man I hate, whom I hope never to see again. I love no one on earth but you, and I never shall love any one but you, though I am so unhappy as not to please you so much as I could wish——"

She covered four pages, which, having begun thus, ended in a rhapsody, far too poetical to be reproduced in print, in which Beatrix so effectually compromised herself that in conclusion she said—

"Am I not wholly at your mercy? Ah, no price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!"

And she signed her name, a thing she had never done for either Calyste or Conti.

On the following day, when the young Count called on the Marquise, she was taking a bath. Antoine begged him to wait. But he dismissed Calyste in his turn, when, starving with passion, he also came early; and la Palférine could see him as he got into his carriage again in despair.

"Oh, Charles," said the Marquise, coming into the drawing-room, "you have ruined me!"

"I know it, madame," replied he coolly. "You swore that you loved me alone, you offered to give me a letter in which you will set down the reasons you would have had for killing yourself, so that in the event of your being unfaithful to me I might poison you without fear of human justice—as if superior souls needed to resort to poison to avenge themselves! You wrote, 'No price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!' Well, I find a contradiction between these closing words of your letter and your speech, 'You have

ruined me.' I will know now whether you have had the courage to break with du Guénic."

"You are revenged on him beforehand," said she, throwing her arms round his neck. "And that matter is enough to bind you and me for ever——"

"Madame," said the Prince of bohemia coldly, "if you desire my friendship, I consent; but there are conditions——"

"Conditions?"

"Yes, conditions—as follows: You must be reconciled with Monsieur de Rochefide, resume the honors of your position, return to your fine house in the Rue d'Anjou—you will be one of the queens of Paris. You can achieve this by making Rochefide play a part in politics and guiding your conduct with such skill and tenacity as Madame d'Espard has displayed. This is the position which any woman must fill whom I am to honor with my devotion——"

"But you forget that Monsieur de Rochefide's consent is necessary."

"Oh, my dear child," replied la Palférine, "we have prepared him for it. I have pledged my honor as a gentleman that you were worth all the Schontzes of the Quartier Saint-Georges put together, and you owe it to my honor——"

For eight days, every day, Calyste called on Beatrix and was invariably sent away by Antoine, who put on a grave face and assured him, "Madame la Marquise is seriously ill."

From thence Calyste rushed off to la Palférine, whose servant always explained, "Monsieur le Comte is gone hunting." And each time Calyste left a letter for the Count.

At last, on the ninth day, Calyste, in reply to a note from la Palférine fixing a time for an explanation, found him at home, but with him Maxime de Trailles, to whom the younger rake wished, no doubt, to give proof of his abilities by getting him to witness the scene.

"Monsieur le Baron," said Charles-Édouard quietly, "here are the six notes you have done me the honor of writing me. They are unopened, just as you sent them; I knew beforehand what might be in them when I heard that you had been seeking me everywhere since the day when I looked at you out of the window, while you were at the door of a house where, on the previous day, I had been at the door while you were at the window. I thought it best to remain ignorant of an ill-judged challenge. Between you and me, you have too much good taste to owe a woman a grudge because she has ceased to love you. And to fight your preferred rival is a bad way to reinstate yourself.

"Also, in the present case, your letters were invalidated, null, and void, as lawyers say, in consequence of a radical error: you have too much good sense to quarrel with a husband for taking back his wife. Monsieur de Rochefide feels that the Marquise's position is undignified. You will no longer find Madame de Rochefide in the Rue de Courcelles; six months hence, next winter, you will see her in her husband's home. You very rashly thrust yourself into the midst of a reconciliation between a married couple, to which you yourself gave rise by failing to shelter Madame de Rochefide from the mortification she endured at the opera-house. As we left, Beatrix, to whom I had already brought some friendly advances on her husband's part, took me in her carriage, and her first words were, 'Go and bring Arthur!'"

"Oh, heavens!" cried Calyste, "she was right; I had failed in my devotion——"

"But, unfortunately, monsieur, poor Arthur was living with one of those dreadful women—that Madame Schontz, who for a long time had expected every hour to find herself deserted. Madame Schontz, who, on the strength of Beatrix's complexion, cherished a desire to see herself some day the Marquise de Rochefide, was furious when she saw her castles in the air fallen. Those women, monsieur, will lose an eye if they can

spoil two for an enemy; la Schontz, who has just left Paris, has been the instrument of spoiling six! And if I had been so rash as to love Beatrix, the sum-total would have been eight. You, monsieur, must have discovered that you need an oculist."

Maxime could not help smiling at the change in Calyste's face; he turned pale as his eyes were opened to the situation.

"Would you believe, Monsieur le Baron, that that wretched woman has consented to marry the man who furnished her with means of revenge? Oh! women! You understand now why Beatrix should shut herself up with Arthur for a few months at Nogent-sur-Marne, where they have a charming little house; they will recover their sight there. Meanwhile their house will be entirely redecorated; the Marquise means to display a princely style of splendor. When a man is sincerely in love with so noble a woman, so great, so exquisite, the victim of conjugal devotion, as soon as she has the courage to return to her duties as a wife, the part of those who adore her as you do, who admire her as I do, is to remain her friends when they can be nothing more.

"You will forgive me for having thought it well to invite Monsieur de Trailles to be present at this explanation, but I was particularly anxious to make this all perfectly clear. For my part, I especially wished to assure you that, though I admire Madame de Rochefide's cleverness as a woman, she is to me supremely odious."

"And that is what our fairest dreams, our celestial loves end in!" said Calyste, overwhelmed by so many revelations and disenchantments.

"In a fish's tail," cried Maxime, "or, which is worse, in an apothecary's gallipot! I have never known a first love that did not end idiotically. Ah, Monsieur le Baron, whatever there may be that is heavenly in man finds its nourishment in heaven alone! This is the excuse for us rakes. I, monsieur, have gone deeply into the question, and, as you see,

I am just married. I shall be faithful to my wife, and I would urge you to return to Madame du Guénic—but—three months hence.

"Do not regret Beatrix; she is a pattern of those vain natures, devoid of energy, but flirts out of vainglory—a Madame d'Espard without political faculty, a woman devoid of heart and brain, frivolous in wickedness. Madame de Rochefide loves no one but Madame de Rochefide; she would have involved you in an irremediable quarrel with Madame du Guénic, and then have thrown you over without a qualm; in fact, she is as inadequate for vice as for virtue."

"I do not agree with you, Maxime," said la Palférine; "she will be the most delightful mistress of a great house in all Paris."

Calyste did not leave the house without shaking hands with Charles-Édouard and Maxime de Trailles, thanking them for having cured him of his illusions.

Three days later the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who had not seen her daughter Sabine since the morning of the great conference, called one morning and found Calyste in his bath-room. Sabine was sewing at some new finery for her baby-clothes.

"Well, how are you children getting on?" asked the kind Duchess.

"As well as possible, dear mamma," replied Sabine, looking at her mother with eyes bright with happiness. "We have acted out the fable of the Two Pigeons—that is all."

Calyste held out his hand to his wife and pressed hers tenderly.

1838–1844.

THE PURSE.

Translated by CLARA BELL.

To Sofka.

"Have you observed, mademoiselle, that the painters and sculptors of the Middle Ages, when they placed two figures in adoration, one on each side of a fair Saint, never failed to give them a family likeness? When you here see your name among those that are dear to me, and under whose auspices I place my works, remember that touching harmony, and you will see in this not so much an act of homage as an expression of the brotherly affection of your devoted servant,

"DE BALZAC."

FOR souls to whom effusiveness is easy there is a delicious hour that falls when it is not yet night, but is no longer day; the twilight gleam throws softened lights or tricksy reflections on every object, and favors a dreamy mood which vaguely weds itself to the play of light and shade. The silence which generally prevails at that time makes it particularly dear to artists, who grow contemplative, stand a few paces back from the pictures on which they can no longer work, and pass judgment on them, rapt by the subject whose most recondite meaning then flashes on the inner eye of genius. He who has never stood pensive by a friend's side in such an hour of poetic dreaming can hardly understand its inexpressible soothingness. Favored by the clear-obscure, the material skill employed by art to produce illusion entirely disappears. If the work is a picture, the figures represented seem to speak and walk; the shade is shadow, the light is day; the flesh

lives, eyes move, blood flows in their veins, and stuffs have a changing sheen. Imagination helps the realism of every detail, and only sees the beauties of the work. At that hour illusion reigns despotically; perhaps it awakes at nightfall! Is not illusion a sort of night to the mind, which we people with dreams? Illusion then unfolds its wings, it bears the soul aloft to the world of fancies, a world full of voluptuous imaginings, where the artist forgets the real world, yesterday and the morrow, the future—everything down to its miseries, the good and the evil alike.

At this magic hour a young painter, a man of talent, who saw in art nothing but Art itself, was perched on a step-ladder which helped him to work at a large, high painting, now nearly finished. Criticising himself, honestly admiring himself, floating on the current of his thoughts, he then lost himself in one of those meditative moods which ravish and elevate the soul, soothe it, and comfort it. His reverie had no doubt lasted a long time. Night fell. Whether he meant to come down from his perch, or whether he made some ill-judged movement, believing himself to be on the floor—the event did not allow of his remembering exactly the cause of his accident—he fell, his head struck a footstool, he lost consciousness and lay motionless during a space of time of which he knew not the length.

A sweet voice aroused him from the stunned condition into which he had sunk. When he opened his eyes the flash of a bright light made him close them again immediately; but through the mist that veiled his senses he heard the whispering of two women, and felt two young, two timid hands on which his head was resting. He soon recovered consciousness, and by the light of an old-fashioned argand lamp he could make out the most charming girl's face he had ever seen, one of those heads which are often supposed to be a freak of the brush, but which to him suddenly realized the theories of the ideal beauty which every artist creates for him-

self, and whence his art proceeds. The features of the unknown belonged, so to say, to the refined and delicate type of Prudhon's school, but had also the poetic sentiment which Girodet gave to the inventions of his phantasy. The freshness of the temples, the regular arch of the eyebrows, the purity of outline, the virginal innocence so plainly stamped on every feature of her countenance, made the girl a perfect creature. Her figure was slight and graceful, and frail in form. Her dress, though simple and neat, revealed neither wealth nor penury.

As he recovered his senses, the painter gave expression to his admiration by a look of surprise, and stammered some confused thanks. He found a handkerchief pressed to his forehead, and above the smell peculiar to a studio, he recognized the strong odor of ether, applied no doubt to revive him from his fainting fit. Finally he saw an old woman, looking like a marquise of the old school, who held the lamp and was advising the young girl.

"Monsieur," said the younger woman in reply to one of the questions put by the painter during the few minutes when he was still under the influence of the vagueness that the shock had produced in his ideas, "my mother and I heard the noise of your fall on the floor, and we fancied we heard a groan. The silence following on the crash alarmed us, and we hurried up. Finding the key in the latch, we happily took the liberty of entering, and we found you lying motionless on the ground. My mother went to fetch what was needed to bathe your head and revive you. You have cut your forehead—there. Do you feel it?"

"Yes, I do now," he replied.

"Oh, it will be nothing," said the old mother. "Happily your head rested against this lay-figure."

"I feel infinitely better," replied the painter. "I need nothing further but a hackney cab to take me home. The porter's wife will go for one."

He tried to repeat his thanks to the two strangers; but at each sentence the elder lady interrupted him, saying, "To-morrow, monsieur, pray be careful to put on leeches or to be bled, and drink a few cups of something healing. A fall may be dangerous."

The young girl stole a look at the painter and at the pictures in the studio. Her expression and her glances revealed perfect propriety; her curiosity seemed rather absence of mind, and her eyes seemed to speak the interest which women feel, with the most engaging spontaneity, in everything which causes us suffering. The two strangers seemed to forget the painter's works in the painter's mishap. When he had reassured them as to his condition they left, looking at him with an anxiety that was equally free from insistence and from familiarity, without asking any indiscreet questions, or trying to incite him to any wish to visit them. Their proceedings all bore the hall-mark of natural refinement and good taste. Their noble and simple manners at first made no great impression on the painter, but subsequently, as he recalled all the details of the incident, he was greatly struck by them.

When they reached the floor beneath that occupied as the painter's studio, the old lady gently observed, "Adelaide, you left the door open."

"That was to come to my assistance," said the painter, with a grateful smile.

"You came down just now, mother," replied the young girl, with a blush.

"Would you like us to accompany you all the way down stairs?" asked the mother. "The stairs are dark."

"No, thank you, indeed, madame; I am much better."

"Hold tightly by the rail."

The two women remained on the landing to light the young man, listening to the sound of his steps as he descended the stairs.

In order to set forth clearly all the exciting and unexpected interest this scene might have for the young painter, it must be told that he had only a few days since established his studio in the attics of this house, situated in the darkest and, therefore, the most muddy part of the Rue de Suresnes, almost opposite the church of the Madeleine, and quite close to his rooms in the Rue des Champs-Élysées. The fame his talent had won him having made him one of the artists most dear to his country, he was beginning to feel free from want, and, to use his own expression, was enjoying his last privations. Instead of going to his work in one of the studios near the city gates, where the moderate rents had hitherto been in proportion to his humble earnings, he had gratified a wish that was new every morning, by sparing himself a long walk, and the loss of much time, now more valuable than ever.

No man in the world would have inspired feelings of a greater interest than Hippolyte Schinner if he would ever have consented to make acquaintance; but he did not lightly intrust to others the secrets of his life. He was the idol of a necessitous mother, who had brought him up at the cost of the severest privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian farmer, had never been married. Her tender soul had been cruelly crushed, long ago, by a rich man, who did not pride himself on any great delicacy in his love affairs. The day when, as a young girl, in all the radiance of her beauty and all the triumph of her life, she suffered, at the cost of her heart and her sweet illusions, the disenchantment which falls on us so slowly and yet so quickly—for we try to postpone as long as possible our belief in evil, and it seems to come too soon—that day was a whole age of reflection, and it was also a day of religious thought and resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had betrayed her, renounced the world, and made a glory of her shame. She gave herself up entirely to her motherly love,

seeking in it all her joys in exchange for the social pleasures to which she bid farewell. She lived by work, saving up a treasure in her son. And, in after years, a day, an hour, repaid her amply for the long and weary sacrifices of her indigence.

At the last exhibition her son had received the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The newspapers, unanimous in hailing an unknown genius, still rang with sincere praises. Artists themselves acknowledged Schinner as a master, and dealers covered his canvasses with gold-pieces. At five-and-twenty Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her woman's soul, understood more clearly than ever his position in the world. Anxious to restore to his mother the pleasures of which society had so long robbed her, he lived for her, hoping by the aid of fame and fortune to see her one day happy, rich, respected, and surrounded by men of mark. Schinner had therefore chosen his friends among the most honorable and distinguished men. Fastidious in the selection of his intimates, he desired to raise still further a position which his talent had placed high. The work to which he had devoted himself from boyhood, by compelling him to dwell in solitude—the mother of great thoughts—had left him the beautiful beliefs which grace the early days of life. His adolescent soul was not closed to any of the thousand bashful emotions by which a young man is a being apart, whose heart abounds in joys, in poetry, in virginal hopes, puerile in the eyes of men of the world, but deep because they are single-hearted.

He was endowed with the gentle and polite manners which speak to the soul, and fascinate even those who do not understand them. He was well-made. His voice, coming from his heart, stirred that of others to noble sentiments, and bore witness to his true modesty by a certain ingenuousness of tone. Those who saw him felt drawn to him by that attraction of the moral nature which men of science are happily

unable to analyze; they would detect in it some phenomenon of galvanism, or the current of I know not what fluid, and express our sentiments in a formula of ratios of oxygen and electricity.

These details will perhaps explain to strong-minded persons and to men of fashion why, in the absence of the porter whom he had sent to the end of the Rue de la Madeleine to call him a coach, Hippolyte Schinner did not ask the man's wife any questions concerning the two women whose kindness of heart had shown itself in his behalf. But though he replied Yes or No to the inquiries, natural under the circumstances, which the good woman made as to his accident, and the friendly intervention of the tenants occupying the fourth floor, he could not hinder her from following the instinct of her kind; she mentioned the two strangers, speaking of them as prompted by the interests of her policy and the subterranean opinions of the porter's lodge.

"Ah," said she, "they were, no doubt, Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother, who have lived here these four years. We do not yet know exactly what these ladies do; in the morning, only till the hour of noon, an old woman who is half deaf, and who never speaks any more than a wall, comes in to help them; in the evening, two or three old gentlemen, with loops of ribbon, like you, monsieur, come to see them, and often stay very late. One of them comes in a carriage with servants, and is said to have sixty thousand francs a year. However, they are very quiet tenants, as you are, monsieur; and economical! they live on nothing, and as soon as a letter is brought they pay for it. It is a queer thing, monsieur, the mother's name is not the same as the daughter's. Ah, but when they go for a walk in the Tuileries, mademoiselle is very smart, and she never goes out but she is followed by a lot of young men; but she shuts the door in their faces, and she is quite right. The proprietor would never allow——"

The coach having come, Hippolyte heard no more, and

went home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, dressed his wound afresh, and would not allow him to go to the studio next day. After taking advice, various treatments were prescribed, and Hippolyte remained at home three days. During this retirement his idle fancy recalled vividly, bit by bit, the details of the scene that had ensued on his fainting fit. The young girl's profile was clearly projected against the darkness of his inward vision; he saw once more the mother's faded features, or he felt the touch of Adelaide's hands. He remembered some gesture which at first had not greatly struck him, but whose exquisite grace was thrown into relief by memory; then an attitude, or the tones of a melodious voice, enhanced by the distance of remembrance, suddenly rose before him, as objects plunging to the bottom of deep waters come back to the surface.

So, on the day when he could resume work, he went early to his studio; but the visit he undoubtedly had a right to pay to his neighbors was the true cause of his haste; he had already forgotten the pictures he had begun. At the moment when a passion throws off its swaddling clothes, inexplicable pleasures are felt, known to those who have loved. So some readers will understand why the painter mounted the stairs to the fourth floor but slowly, and will be in the secret of the throbs that followed each other so rapidly in his heart at the moment when he saw the humble brown door of the rooms inhabited by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This girl, whose name was not the same as her mother's, had aroused the young painter's deepest sympathies; he chose to fancy some similarity between himself and her as to their position, and attributed to her misfortunes of birth akin to his own. All the time he worked Hippolyte gave himself very willingly to thoughts of love, and made a great deal of noise to compel the two ladies to think of him as he was thinking of them. He stayed late at the studio and dined there; then, at about seven o'clock, he went down to call on his neighbors.

No painter of manners has ventured to initiate us—perhaps out of modesty—into the really curious privacy of certain Parisian existences, into the secret of the dwellings whence emerge such fresh and elegant toilets, such brilliant women, who, rich on the surface, allow the signs of very doubtful comfort to peep out in every part of their home. If, here, the picture is too boldly drawn, if you find it tedious in places, do not blame the description, which is, indeed, part and parcel of my story; for the appearance of the rooms inhabited by his two neighbors had a great influence on the feelings and hopes of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those proprietors in whom there is a foregone and profound horror of repairs and decoration, one of the men who regard their position as Paris house-owners as a business. In the vast chain of moral species, these people hold a middle place between the miser and the usurer. Optimists in their own interests, they are all faithful to the Austrian *status quo.* If you speak of moving a cupboard or a door, of opening the most indispensable air-hole, their eyes flash, their bile rises, they rear like a frightened horse. When the wind blows down a few chimney-pots they are quite ill, and deprive themselves of an evening at the Gymnase or the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, "on account of repairs." Hippolyte, who had seen the performance gratis of a comical scene with Monsieur Molineux, as concerning certain decorative repairs in his studio, was not surprised to see the dark, greasy paint, the oily stains, spots, and other disagreeable accessories that varied the woodwork. And these stigmata of poverty are not altogether devoid of poetry in an artist's eyes.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur herself opened the door. On recognizing the young artist she bowed, and at the same time, with Parisian adroitness and with the presence of mind that pride can lend, turned round to shut a door in a glass partition through which Hippolyte might have caught sight of

some linen hung by lines over patent ironing stoves, an old camp-bed, some wood-embers, charcoal, irons, a filter, the household crockery, and all the utensils familiar to a small household. India-muslin curtains, fairly white, carefully screened this lumber-room—a *capharnaüm*, as the French call such a domestic laboratory—which was lighted by windows looking out on a neighboring yard.

Hippolyte, with the quick eye of an artist, saw the uses, the furniture, the general effect and condition of this first room, thus cut in half. The more honorable half, which served both as anteroom and dining-room, was hung with an old salmon-rose-colored paper, with a flock border, the manufacture of Reveillon, no doubt; the holes and spots had been carefully touched over with wafers. Prints representing the battles of Alexander, by Lebrun, in frames with the gilding rubbed off, were symmetrically arranged on the walls. In the middle stood a massive mahogany table, old-fashioned in shape, and worn at the edges. A small stove, whose thin straight pipe was scarcely visible, stood in front of the chimney-place, but the hearth was occupied by a cupboard. By a strange contrast the chairs showed some remains of former splendor; they were of carved mahogany, but the red morocco seats, the gilt nails and reeded backs, showed as many scars as an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard.

This room did duty as a museum of certain objects, such as are never seen but in this kind of amphibious household; nameless objects with the stamp at once of luxury and penury. Among other curiosities Hippolyte noticed a splendidly finished telescope, hanging over the small discolored glass that decorated the chimney. To harmonize with this strange collection of furniture there was, between the chimney and the partition, a wretched sideboard of painted wood, pretending to be mahogany, of all woods the most impossible to imitate. But the slippery red quarries, the shabby little rugs in front of the chairs, and all the furniture shone with the

hard-rubbing cleanliness which lends a treacherous lustre to old things by making their defects, their age, and their long service still more conspicuous. An indescribable odor pervaded the room, a mingled smell of the exhalations from the lumber-room and the vapors of the dining-room, with those from the stairs, though the window was partly open. The air from the street fluttered the dusty curtains, which were carefully drawn so as to hide the window-bay, where former tenants had testified to their presence by various ornamental additions—a sort of domestic fresco.

Adelaide hastened to open the door of the inner room, where she announced the painter with evident pleasure. Hippolyte, who, of yore, had seen the same signs of poverty in his mother's home, noted them with the singular vividness of impression which characterizes the earliest acquisitions of memory, and entered into the details of this existence better than any one else would have done. As he recognized the facts of his life as a child, the kind young fellow felt neither scorn for disguised misfortune nor pride in the luxury he had lately conquered for his mother.

"Well, monsieur, I hope you no longer feel the effects of your fall," said the old lady, rising from an antique armchair that stood by the chimney, and offering him a seat.

"No, madame. I have come to thank you for the kind care you gave me, and above all mademoiselle, who heard me fall."

As he uttered this speech, stamped with the exquisite stupidity given to the mind by the first disturbing symptoms of true love, Hippolyte looked at the young girl. Adelaide was lighting the argand lamp, no doubt, that she might get rid of a tallow candle fixed in a large, flat, copper candlestick, and graced with a heavy fluting of grease from its guttering. She answered with a slight bow, carried the flat candlestick into the anteroom, came back, and, after placing the lamp on the mantel, seated herself by her mother, a little behind the

painter, so as to be able to look at him at her ease, while apparently much interested in the burning of the lamp; the flame, checked by the damp in a dingy chimney, sputtered as it struggled with a charred and badly trimmed wick. Hippolyte, seeing the large mirror that decorated the mantel, immediately fixed his eyes on it to admire Adelaide. Thus the girl's little stratagem only served to embarrass them both.

While talking with Madame Leseigneur, for Hippolyte, called her so, on the chance of being right, he examined the room, but unobtrusively and by stealth.

The Egyptian figures on the iron fire-dogs were scarcely visible, the hearth was so heaped with cinders; two brands tried to meet in front of a sham log of firebrick, as carefully buried as a miser's treasure could ever be. An old Aubusson carpet, very much faded, very much mended, and as worn as a pensioner's coat, did not cover the whole of the tiled floor, and the cold struck to his feet. The walls were hung with a reddish paper, imitating figured silk with a yellow pattern. In the middle of the wall opposite the windows the painter saw a crack, and the outline marked on the paper of double-doors, shutting off a recess where Madame Leseigneur slept no doubt, a fact ill disguised by a sofa in front of the door. Facing the chimney, above a mahogany chest of drawers of handsome and tasteful design, was the portrait of an officer of rank, which the dim light did not allow him to see well; but from what he could make out he thought that the fearful daub must have been painted in China. The window-curtains of red silk were as much faded as the furniture, in red and yellow worsted work, if this room "contrived a double debt to pay." On the marble top of the chest of drawers was a costly malachite tray, with a dozen coffee cups magnificently painted, and made, no doubt, at Sèvres. On the chimney-shelf stood the omnipresent Empire clock: a warrior driving the four horses of a chariot, whose wheel bore the numbers of the hours on its spokes. The

tapers in the tall candlesticks were yellow with smoke, and at each corner of the shelf stood a porcelain vase crowned with artificial flowers full of dust and stuck into moss.

In the middle of the room Hippolyte remarked a card-table ready for play, with new packs of cards. For an observer there was something heartrending in the sight of this misery painted up like an old woman who wants to falsify her face. At such a sight every man of sense must at once have stated to himself this obvious dilemma—either these two women are honesty itself, or they live by intrigue and gambling. But on looking at Adelaide, a man so pure-minded as Schinner could not but believe in her perfect innocence, and ascribe the incoherence of the furniture to honorable causes.

"My dear," said the old lady to the young one, "I am cold; make a little fire, and give me my shawl."

Adelaide went into a room next the drawing-room, where she no doubt slept, and returned bringing her mother a cashmere shawl, which when new must have been very costly; the pattern was Indian; but it was old, faded, and full of darns, and matched the furniture. Madame Leseigneur wrapped herself in it very artistically, and with the readiness of an old woman who wishes to make her words seem truth. The young girl ran lightly off to the lumber-room and reappeared with a bundle of small wood, which she gallantly threw on the fire to revive it.

It would be rather difficult to reproduce the conversation which followed among these three persons. Hippolyte, guided by the tact which is almost always the outcome of misfortune suffered in early youth, dared not allow himself to make the least remark as to his neighbors' situation, as he saw all about him the signs of ill-disguised poverty. The simplest question would have been an indiscretion, and could only be ventured on by old friendship. The painter was nevertheless absorbed in the thought of this concealed penury, it pained his generous soul; but knowing how offensive every kind of pity may be,

even the friendliest, the disparity between his thoughts and his words made him feel uncomfortable.

The two ladies at first talked of painting, for women easily guess the secret embarrassment of a first call; they themselves feel it, perhaps, and the nature of their minds supplies them with a thousand devices to put an end to it. By questioning the young man as to the material exercise of his art, and as to his studies, Adelaide and her mother emboldened him to talk. The indefinable nothings of their chat, animated by kindly feeling, naturally led Hippolyte to flash forth remarks or reflections which showed the character of his habits and of his mind. Trouble had prematurely faded the old lady's face, formerly handsome, no doubt; nothing was left but the more prominent features, the outline; in a word, the skeleton of a countenance of which the whole effect indicated great shrewdness with much grace in the play of the eyes, in which could be discerned the expression peculiar to women of the old Court; an expression that cannot be defined in words. Those fine and mobile features might quite as well indicate bad feelings, and suggest astuteness and womanly artifice carried to a high pitch of wickedness, as reveal the refined delicacy of a beautiful soul.

Indeed, the face of a woman has this element of mystery to puzzle the ordinary observer, that the difference between frankness and duplicity, the genius for intrigue and the genius of the heart, is there inscrutable. A man gifted with a penetrating eye can read the intangible shade of difference produced by a more or less curved line, a more or less deep dimple, a more or less prominent feature. The appreciation of these indications lies entirely in the domain of intuition; this alone can lead to the discovery of what every one is interested in concealing. This old lady's face was like the room she inhabited; it seemed as difficult to detect whether this squalor covered vice or the highest virtue, as to decide whether Adelaide's mother was an old coquette accustomed

to weigh, to calculate, to sell everything, or a loving woman, full of noble feeling and amiable qualities. But at Schinner's age the first impulse of the heart is to believe in goodness. And, indeed, as he studied Adelaide's noble and almost haughty brow, as he looked into her eyes full of soul and thought, he breathed, so to speak, the sweet and modest fragrance of virtue. In the course of the conversation he seized an opportunity of discussing portraits in general, to give himself a pretext for examining the frightful pastel, of which the color had flown, and the chalk in many places fallen away.

"You are attached to that picture for the sake of the likeness, no doubt, mesdames, for the drawing is dreadful?" he said, looking at Adelaide.

"It was done at Calcutta, in great haste," replied the mother, in an agitated voice.

She gazed at the formless sketch with the deep absorption which memories of happiness produce when they are roused and fall on the heart like a beneficent dew to whose refreshing touch we love to yield ourselves; but in the expression of the old lady's face there were traces, too, of perennial regret. At least, it was thus that the painter chose to interpret her attitude and countenance, and he presently sat down again by her side.

"Madame," he said, "in a very short time the colors of that pastel will have disappeared. The portrait will only survive in your memory. Where you will still see the face that is dear to you, others will see nothing at all. Will you allow me to reproduce the likeness on canvas? It will be more permanently recorded then than on that sheet of paper. Grant me, I beg, as a neighborly favor, the pleasure of doing you this service. There are times when an artist is glad of a respite from his greater undertakings by doing work of less lofty pretensions, so it will be a recreation for me to paint that head."

The old lady flushed as she heard the painter's words, and

Adelaide shot one of those glances of deep feeling which seem to flash from the soul. Hippolyte wanted to feel some tie linking him with his two neighbors, to conquer a right to mingle in their life. His offer, appealing as it did to the liveliest affections of the heart, was the only one he could possibly make; it gratified his pride as an artist and could not hurt the feelings of the ladies. Madame Lèseigneur accepted, without eagerness or reluctance, but with the self-possession of a noble soul, fully aware of the character of bonds formed by such an obligation, while, at the same time, they are its highest glory as a proof of esteem.

"I fancy," said the painter, "that the uniform is that of a naval officer?"

"Yes," she said, "that of a captain in command of a vessel. Monsieur de Rouville—my husband—died at Batavia in consequence of a wound received in a fight with an English ship they fell in with off the Asiatic coast. He commanded a frigate of fifty-six guns, and the Revenge carried ninety-six. The struggle was very unequal, but he defended his ship so bravely that he held out till nightfall and got away. When I came back to France Bonaparte was not yet in power, and I was refused a pension. When I applied again for it, quite lately, I was sternly informed that if the Baron de Rouville had emigrated I should not have lost him; that by this time he would have been rear-admiral; finally, his excellency quoted I know not what decree of forfeiture. I took this step, to which I was urged by my friends, only for the sake of my poor Adelaide. I have always hated the idea of holding out my hand as a beggar in the name of a grief which deprives a woman of voice and strength. I do not like this money valuation for blood irreparably spilt——"

"Dear mother, this subject always does you harm," said her daughter.

In response to this remark from Adelaide, the Baronne Leseigneur bowed, and was silent.

"Monsieur," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I had supposed that a painter's work was generally fairly quiet?"

At this question Schinner colored, remembering the noise he had made. Adelaide said no more, and spared him a falsehood by rising at the sound of a carriage stopping at the door. She went into her own room, and returned carrying a pair of tall, gilt candlesticks with partly burnt wax-candles, which she quickly lighted, and, without waiting for the bell to ring, she opened the door of the outer room, where she set the lamp down. The sound of a kiss given and received found an echo in Hippolyte's heart. The young man's impatience to see the man who treated Adelaide with so much familiarity was not immediately gratified; the new-comers had a conversation, which he thought very long, in an undertone, with the young girl.

At last Mademoiselle de Rouville returned, followed by two men, whose costume, countenance, and appearance are a long story.

The first, a man of about sixty, wore one of the coats invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., then on the throne, in which the most difficult problem of the sartorial art had been solved by a tailor who ought to be immortal. That artist certainly understood the art of compromise, which was the moving genius of that period of shifting politics. Is it not a rare merit to be able to take the measure of the time? This coat, which the young men of the present day may conceive to be fabulous, was neither civil nor military, and might pass for civil or military by turns. *Fleurs-de-lis* (lily flowers) were embroidered on the lapels of the back skirts. The gilt buttons also bore *fleurs-de-lis;* on the shoulders a pair of straps cried out for useless epaulettes; these military appendages were there like a petition without a recommendation. This old gentleman's coat was of dark blue cloth, and the buttonhole had blossomed into many colored ribbons. He, no doubt, always carried his hat in his hand—a three-cornered

cocked hat, with a gold cord—for the snowy wings of his powdered hair showed not a trace of its pressure. He might have been taken for not more than fifty years of age, and seemed to enjoy robust health. While wearing the frank and loyal expression of the old émigrés, his countenance also hinted at the easy habits of a libertine, at the light and reckless passions of the Musketeers formerly so famous in the annals of gallantry. His gestures, his attitude, and his manner proclaimed that he had no intention of correcting himself of his royalism, of his religion, or of his love affairs.

A really fantastic figure came in behind this specimen of "Louis XIV.'s light infantry"—a nickname given by the Bonapartists to these venerable survivors of the Monarchy. To do it justice it ought to be made the principal object in the picture, and it is but an accessory. Imagine a lean, dry man, dressed like the former, but seeming to be only his reflection, or his shadow, if you will. The coat, new on the first, on the second was old; the powder in his hair looked less white, the gold of the *fleurs-de-lis* less bright, the shoulder-straps more hopeless and dog's-eared; his intellect seemed more feeble, his life nearer the fatal term than in the former. In short, he realized Rivarol's witticism on Champcenetz, "He is the moonlight of me." He was simply his double, a paler and poorer double, for there was between them all the difference that lies between the first and last impressions of a lithograph.

This speechless old man was a mystery to the painter, and always remained a mystery. The chevalier, for he was a chevalier, did not speak, nobody spoke to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who followed at the old gallant's heels as a lady companion does at an old lady's? Did he fill a place midway between a dog, a parrot, and a friend? Had he saved his patron's fortune, or only his life? Was he the Trim to another Captain Toby? Elsewhere, as at the Baronne de Rouville's, he always piqued curiosity without satisfying it.

Who, after the Restoration, could remember the attachment which, before the Revolution, had bound this man to his friend's wife, dead now these twenty years?

The leader, who appeared the least dilapidated of these wrecks, came gallantly up to Madame de Rouville, kissed her hand, and sat down by her. The other bowed and placed himself not far from his model, at a distance represented by two chairs. Adelaide came behind the old gentleman's armchair and leaned her elbows on the back, unconsciously imitating the attitude given to Dido's sister by Guérin in his famous picture.

Though the gentleman's familiarity was that of a father, his freedom seemed at the moment to annoy the young girl.

"What, are you sulky with me?" he said.

Then he shot at Schinner one of those side-looks full of shrewdness and cunning, diplomatic looks, whose expression betrays the discreet uneasiness, the polite curiosity of well-bred people, and seems to ask, when they see a stranger, "Is he one of us?"

"This is our neighbor," said the old lady, pointing to Hippolyte. "Monsieur is a celebrated painter, whose name must be known to you in spite of your indifference to the arts."

The old man saw his friend's mischievous intent in suppressing the name, and bowed to the young man.

"Certainly," said he. "I heard a great deal about his pictures at the last Salon. Talent has immense privileges," he added, observing the artist's red ribbon. "That distinction, which we must earn at the cost of our blood and long service, you win in your youth; but all glory is of the same kindred," he said, laying his hand on his cross of Saint-Louis.

Hippolyte murmured a few words of acknowledgment, and was silent again, satisfied to admire with growing enthusiasm the beautiful girl's head that charmed him so

much. He was soon lost in contemplation, completely forgetting the extreme misery of the dwelling. To him Adelaide's face stood out against a luminous atmosphere. He replied briefly to the questions addressed to him, which, by very good luck, he heard, thanks to a singular faculty of the soul which sometimes seems to have a double consciousness. Who has not known what it is to sit lost in sad or delicious meditation, listening to its voice within, while attending to a conversation or to reading? An admirable duality which often helps us to tolerate a bore! Hope, prolific and smiling, poured out before him a thousand visions of happiness; and he refused to consider what was going on around him. As confiding as a child, it seemed to him base to analyze a pleasure. After a short lapse of time he perceived that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman. As to the satellite, faithful to his function as a shadow, he stood behind his friend's chair watching his game, and answering the player's mute inquiries by little approving nods, repeating the questioning gestures of the other countenance.

"Du Halga, I always lose," said the gentleman.

"You discard badly," replied the Baronne de Rouville.

"For three months now I have never won a single game," said he.

"Have you the aces?" asked the old lady.

"Yes, one more to mark," said he.

"Shall I come and advise you?" inquired Adelaide of the irascible player.

"No, no. Stay where I can see you. By Gad, it would be losing too much not to have you to look at!"

At last the game was over. The gentleman pulled out his purse, and throwing two louis d'or on the table, not without temper—

"Forty francs," he exclaimed, "the exact sum. Deuce take it! It is eleven o'clock."

"It is eleven o'clock," repeated the silent figure, looking at the painter.

The young man, hearing these words rather more distinctly than all the others, thought it time to retire. Coming back to the world of ordinary ideas, he found a few commonplace remarks to make, took leave of the Baroness, her daughter, and the two strangers, and went away, wholly possessed by the first raptures of true love, without attempting to analyze the little incidents of the evening.

On the morrow the young painter felt the most ardent desire to see Adelaide once more. If he had followed the call of his passion, he would have gone to his neighbors' door at six in the morning, when he went to his studio. However, he still was reasonable enough to wait till the afternoon. But as soon as he thought he could present himself to Madame de Rouville, he went downstairs, rang, blushing like a girl, shyly asked Mademoiselle Leseigneur, who came to let him in, to let him have the portrait of the Baron.

"But come in," said Adelaide, who had no doubt heard him come down from the studio.

The painter followed, bashful and out of countenance, not knowing what to say, happiness had so dulled his wit. To see Adelaide, to hear the rustle of her skirt, after longing for a whole morning to be near her, after starting up a hundred times—"I will go down now"—and not to have gone; this was to him life so rich that such sensations, too greatly prolonged, would have worn out his spirit. The heart has the singular power of giving extraordinary value to mere nothings. What joy it is to a traveler to treasure a blade of grass, an unfamiliar leaf, if he has risked his life to pluck it! It is the same with the trifles of love.

The old lady was not in the drawing-room. When the young girl found herself there, alone with the painter, she brought a chair to stand on, to take down the picture; but perceiving that she could not unhook it without setting her

foot on the chest of drawers, she turned to Hippolyte, and said with a blush—

"I am not tall enough. Will you get it down?"

A feeling of modesty, betrayed in the expression of her face and the tones of her voice, was the real motive of her request; and the young man, understanding this, gave her one of those glances of intelligence which are the sweetest language of love. Seeing that the painter had read her soul, Adelaide cast down her eyes with the instinct of reserve which is the secret of a maiden's heart. Hippolyte, finding nothing to say, and feeling almost timid, took down the picture, examined it gravely, carrying it to the light at the window, and then went away, without saying a word to Mademoiselle Leseigneur but, "I will return it soon."

During this brief moment they both went through one of those storms of agitation of which the effects in the soul may be compared to those of a stone flung into a deep lake. The most delightful waves of thought rise and follow each other, indescribable, repeated, and aimless, tossing the heart like the circular ripples, which for a long time fret the waters, starting from the point where the stone fell.

Hippolyte returned to the studio bearing the portrait. His easel was ready with a fresh canvas, and his palette set, his brushes cleaned, the spot and the light carefully chosen. And till the dinner hour he worked at the painting with the ardor artists throw into their whims. He went again that evening to the Baronne de Rouville's, and remained from nine till eleven. Excepting the different subjects of conversation, this evening was exactly like the last. The two old men arrived at the same hour, the same game of piquet was played, the same speeches made by the players, the sum lost by Adelaide's friend was not less considerable than on the previous evening; only Hippolyte, a little bolder, ventured to chat with the young girl.

A week passed thus, and in the course of it the painter's

feelings and Adelaide's underwent the slow and delightful transformations which bring two souls to a perfect understanding. Every day the look with which the girl welcomed her friend grew more intimate, more confiding, gayer, and more open; her voice and manner became more eager and more familiar. They laughed and talked together, telling each other their thoughts, speaking of themselves with the simplicity of two children who have made friends in a day, as much as if they had met constantly for three years. Schinner wished to be taught piquet. Being ignorant and a novice, he, of course, made blunder after blunder, and, like the old man, he lost almost every game. Without having spoken a word of love the lovers knew that they were all in all to one another. Hippolyte enjoyed exerting his power over his gentle little friend, and many concessions were made to him by Adelaide, who, timid and devoted to him, was quite deceived by the assumed fits of temper, such as the least skilled lover and the most guileless girl can affect; and which they constantly play off, as spoiled children abuse the power they owe to their mother's affection. Thus all familiarity between the girl and the old Count was soon put a stop to. She understood the painter's melancholy, and the thoughts hidden in the furrows on his brow, from the abrupt tone of the few words he spoke when the old man unceremoniously kissed Adelaide's hands or throat.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur, on her part, soon expected her lover to give her a short account of all his actions; she was so unhappy, so restless when Hippolyte did not come; she scolded him so effectually for his absence that the painter had to give up seeing his other friends and now went nowhere. Adelaide allowed the natural jealousy of women to be perceived when she heard that sometimes at eleven o'clock, on quitting the house, the painter still had visits to pay, and was to be seen in the most brilliant drawing-rooms of Paris. This mode of life, she assured him, was bad for his health;

then, with the intense conviction to which the accent, the emphasis, and the look of one we love lend so much weight, she asserted that a man who was obliged to expend his time and the charms of his wit on several women at once could not be the object of any very warm affection. Thus the painter was led, as much by the tyranny of his passion as by the exactions of a girl in love, to live exclusively in the little apartment where everything attracted him.

And never was there a purer or more ardent love. On both sides the same trustfulness, the same delicacy, gave their passion increase without the aid of those sacrifices by which many persons try to prove their affection. Between these two there was such a constant interchange of sweet emotion that they knew not which gave or received the most.

A spontaneous affinity made the union of their souls a close one. The progress of this true feeling was so rapid that two months after the accident to which the painter owed the happiness of knowing Adelaide, their lives were one life. From early morning the young girl, hearing footsteps overhead, could say to herself, "He is there." When Hippolyte went home to his mother at the dinner hour he never failed to look in on his neighbors, and in the evening he flew there at the accustomed hour with a lover's punctuality. Thus the most tyrannical woman or the most ambitious in the matter of love could not have found the smallest fault with the young painter. And Adelaide tasted of unmixed and unbounded happiness as she saw the fullest realization of the ideal of which, at her age, it is so natural to dream.

The old gentleman now came more rarely; Hippolyte, who had been jealous, had taken his place at the green table, and shared his constant ill-luck at cards. And sometimes, in the midst of his happiness, as he considered Madame de Rouville's disastrous position—for he had had more than one proof of her extreme poverty—an importunate thought would haunt him. Several times he had said to himself as he went home,

"Strange! twenty francs every evening?" and he dared not confess to himsef his odious suspicions.

He spent two months over the portrait, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he looked upon it as one of his best works. Madame la Baronne de Rouville had never spoken of it again. Was this from indifference or pride? The painter would not allow himself to account for this silence. He joyfully plotted with Adelaide to hang the picture in its place when Madame de Rouville should be out. So one day, during the walk her mother usually took in the Tuileries, Adelaide for the first time went up to Hippolyte's studio, on the pretext of seeing the portrait in the good light in which it had been painted. She stood speechless and motionless, but in ecstatic contemplation, in which all a woman's feelings were merged. For are they not all comprehended in boundless admiration for the man she loves? When the painter, uneasy at her silence, leaned forward to look at her, she held out her hand, unable to speak a word, but two tears fell from her eyes. Hippolyte took her hand and covered it with kisses; for a minute they looked at each other in silence, both longing to confess their love, and not daring. The painter kept her hand in his, and the same glow, the same throb, told them that their hearts were both beating wildly. The young girl, too greatly agitated, gently drew away from Hippolyte, and said, with a look of the utmost simplicity—

"You will make my mother very happy."

"What! only your mother?" he asked.

"Oh, I am too happy."

The painter bent his head and remained silent, frightened at the vehemence of the feelings which her tones stirred in his heart. Then, both understanding the perils of the situation, they went downstairs and hung up the picture in its place. Hippolyte dined for the first time with the Baroness, who, greatly overcome and drowned in tears, must needs embrace him.

In the evening the old émigré, the Baron de Rouville's old comrade, paid the ladies a visit to announce that he had just been promoted to the rank of vice-admiral. His voyages by land over Germany and Russia had been counted as naval campaigns. On seeing the portrait he cordially shook the painter's hand, and exclaimed, "By Gad! though my old hulk does not deserve to be perpetuated, I would gladly give five hundred pistoles to see myself as like as that is to my dear old Rouville."

At this hint the Baroness looked at her young friend and smiled, while her face lighted up with an expression of sudden gratitude. Hippolyte suspected that the old admiral wished to offer him the price of both portraits while paying for his own. His pride as an artist, no less than his jealousy perhaps, took offense at the thought, and he replied—

"Monsieur, if I were a portrait painter, I should not have done this one."

The admiral bit his lip and sat down to cards.

The painter remained near Adelaide, who proposed a dozen hands of piquet, to which he agreed. As he played he observed in Madame de Rouville an excitement over the game which surprised him. Never before had the old Baroness manifested so ardent a desire to win or so keen a joy in fingering the old gentleman's gold-pieces. During the evening evil suspicions troubled Hippolyte's happiness and filled him with distrust. Could it be that Madame de Rouville lived by gambling? Was she playing at this moment to pay off some debt or under the pressure of necessity? Perhaps she had not paid her rent. That old man seemed shrewd enough not to allow his money to be taken with impunity. What interest attracted him to this poverty-stricken house, he who was rich? Why, when he had formerly been so familiar with Adelaide, had he given up the rights he had acquired and which were perhaps his due?

These involuntary reflections prompted him to watch the

old man and the Baroness, whose meaning looks and certain sidelong glances cast at Adelaide displeased him. "Am I being duped?" was Hippolyte's last idea—horrible, scathing, for he believed it just enough to be tortured by it. He determined to stay after the departure of the two old men, to confirm or to dissipate his suspicions. He drew out his purse to pay Adelaide; but, carried away by his poignant thoughts, he laid it on the table, falling into a reverie of brief duration; then, ashamed of his silence, he arose, answered some commonplace question from Madame de Rouville, and went close up to her to examine the withered features while he was talking to her.

He went away, racked by a thousand doubts. He had gone down but a few steps when he turned back to fetch the forgotten purse.

"I left my purse here!" he said to the young girl.

"No," she said, reddening.

"I thought it was there," and he pointed to the card-table. Not finding it, in his shame for Adelaide and the Baroness, he looked at them with a blank amazement that made them laugh, turned pale, felt his waistcoat, and said, "I must have made a mistake. I have it somewhere, no doubt."

In one end of the purse there were fifteen louis d'or, and in the other some small change. The theft was so flagrant, and denied with such effrontery, that Hippolyte no longer felt a doubt as to his neighbors' morals. He stood still on the stairs and got down with some difficulty; his knees shook, he felt dizzy, he was in a cold sweat, he shivered, and found himself unable to walk, struggling, as he was, with the agonizing shock caused by the destruction of all his hopes. And at this moment he found lurking in his memory a number of observations, trifling in themselves, but which corroborated his frightful suspicions, and which, by proving the certainty of this last incident, opened his eyes as to the character and life of these two women.

Had they really waited until the portrait was given them before robbing him of his purse? In such a combination the theft was even more odious. The painter recollected that for the last two or three evenings Adelaide, while seeming to examine with a girl's curiosity the particular stitch of the worn silk netting, was probably counting the coins in the purse, while making some light jests, quite innocent in appearance, but no doubt with the object of watching for a moment when the sum was worth stealing.

"The old admiral has perhaps good reasons for not marrying Adelaide, and so the Baroness has tried——"

But at this hypothesis he checked himself, not finishing his thought, which was contradicted by a very just reflection, "If the Baroness hopes to get me to marry her daughter," thought he, "they would not have robbed me."

Then, clinging to his illusion, to the love that already had taken such deep root, he tried to find a justification in some accident. "The purse must have fallen on the floor," said he to himself, "or I left it lying on my chair. Or perhaps I have it about me—I am so absent-minded!" He searched himself with hurried movements, but did not find the ill-starred purse. His memory cruelly retraced the fatal truth, minute by minute. He distinctly saw the purse lying on the green cloth; but then, doubtful no longer, he excused Adelaide, telling himself that persons in misfortune should not be so hastily condemned. There was, of course, some secret behind this apparently degrading action. He would not admit that that proud and noble face was a lie.

At the same time the wretched rooms rose before him, denuded of the poetry of love which beautifies everything; he saw them dirty and faded, regarding them as emblematic of an inner life devoid of honor, idle and vicious. Are not our feelings written, as it were, on things about us?

Next morning he arose, not having slept. The heartache, that terrible malady of the soul, had made rapid inroads.

To lose the bliss we dreamed of, to renounce our whole future, is a keener pang than that caused by the loss of known happiness, however complete it may have been; for is not Hope better than Memory? The thoughts into which our spirit is suddenly plunged are like a shoreless sea in which we may swim for a moment, but where our love is doomed to drown and die. And it is a frightful death. Are not our feelings the most glorious part of our life? It is this partial death which, in certain delicate or powerful natures, leads to the terrible ruin produced by disenchantment, by hopes and passions betrayed. Thus it was with the young painter. He went out at a very early hour to walk under the fresh shade of the Tuileries, absorbed in his thoughts, forgetting everything in the world.

There by chance he met one of his most intimate friends, a schoolfellow and studio-mate, with whom he had lived on better terms than with a brother.

"Why, Hippolyte, what ails you?" asked François Souchet, the young sculptor who had just won the first prize and was soon to set out for Italy.

"I am most unhappy," replied Hippolyte gravely.

"Nothing but a love affair can cause you grief. Money, glory, respect—you lack nothing."

Insensibly the painter was led into confidences, and confessed his love. The moment he mentioned the Rue de Suresne, and a young girl living on the fourth floor, "Stop, stop," cried Souchet lightly. "A little girl I see every morning at the church of the Assumption, and with whom I have a flirtation. But, my dear fellow, we all know her. The mother is a Baroness. Do you really believe in a Baroness living up four flights of stairs? Brrr! Why, you are a relic of the golden age! We see the old mother here, in this avenue, every day; why, her face, her appearance, tell everything. What, have you not known her for what she is by the way she holds her bag?"

The two friends walked up and down for some time, and several young men who knew Souchet or Schinner joined them. The painter's adventure, which the sculptor regarded as unimportant, was repeated by him.

"So he, too, has seen that young lady!" said Souchet.

And then there were comments, laughter, innocent mockery, full of the liveliness familiar to artists, but which pained Hippolyte frightfully. A certain native reticence made him uncomfortable as he saw his heart's secret so carelessly handled, his passion rent, torn to tatters, a young and unknown girl, whose life seemed to be so modest, the victim of condemnation, right or wrong, but pronounced with such reckless indifference. He pretended to be moved by a spirit of contradiction, asking each for proofs of his assertions, and their jests began again.

"But, my dear boy, have you seen the Baroness' shawl?" asked Souchet.

"Have you ever followed the girl when she patters off to church in the morning?" said Joseph Bridau, a young dauber in Gros' studio.

"Oh, the mother has among other virtues a certain gray gown, which I regard as typical," said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

"Listen, Hippolyte," the sculptor went on. "Come here at about four o'clock and just study the walk of both mother and daughter. If after that you still have doubts! well, no one can ever make anything of you; you would be capable of marrying your porter's daughter."

Torn by the most conflicting feelings, the painter parted from his friends. It seemed to him that Adelaide and her mother must be superior to these accusations, and at the bottom of his heart he was filled with remorse for having suspected the purity of this beautiful and simple girl. He went to his studio, passing the door of the rooms where Adelaide was, and conscious of a pain at his heart which no man can misapprehend. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately that, in spite

of the theft of the purse, he still worshiped her. His love was that of the Chevalier des Grieux admiring his mistress, and holding her as pure, even on the cart which carries such lost creatures to prison. "Why should my love not keep her the purest of women? Why abandon her to evil and to vice without holding out a rescuing hand to her?"

The idea of this mission pleased him. Love makes a gain of everything. Nothing tempts a young man more than to play the part of a good genius to a woman. There is something inexplicably romantic in such an enterprise which appeals to a highly strung soul. Is it not the utmost stretch of devotion under the loftiest and most engaging aspect? Is there not something grand in the thought that we love enough still to love on when the love of others dwindles and dies?

Hippolyte sat down in his studio, gazed at his picture without doing anything to it, seeing the figures through tears that swelled in his eyes, holding his brush in his hand, going up to the canvas as if to soften down an effect, but not touching it. Night fell, and he was still in this attitude. Roused from his moodiness by the darkness, he went downstairs, met the old admiral on the way, looked darkly at him as he bowed, and fled.

He had intended going in to see the ladies, but the sight of Adelaide's protector froze his heart and dispelled his purpose. For the hundredth time he wondered what interest could bring this old prodigal, with his eighty thousand francs a year, to this fourth story, where he lost about forty francs every evening; and he thought he could guess what it was.

The next and following days Hippolyte threw himself into his work, to try to conquer his passion by the swift rush of ideas and the ardor of composition. He half succeeded. Study consoled him, though it could not smother the memories of so many tender hours spent with Adelaide.

One evening, as he left his studio, he saw the door of the

ladies' rooms half open. Somebody was standing in the recess of the window, and the position of the door and the staircase made it impossible that the painter should pass without seeing Adelaide. He bowed coldly, with a glance of supreme indifference; but, judging of the girl's suffering by his own, he felt an inward shudder as he reflected on the bitterness which that look and that coldness must produce in a loving heart. To crown the most delightful feast which ever brought joy to two pure souls, by eight days of disdain, of the deepest and most utter contempt! A frightful conclusion! And perhaps the purse had been found, perhaps Adelaide had looked for her friend every evening.

This simple and natural idea filled the lover with fresh remorse; he asked himself whether the proofs of attachment given him by the young girl, the delightful talks, full of the love that had so charmed him, did not deserve at least an inquiry; were not worthy of some justification. Ashamed of having resisted the promptings of his heart for a whole week, and feeling himself almost a criminal in this mental struggle, he called the same evening on Madame de Rouville.

All his suspicions, all his evil thoughts vanished at the sight of the young girl, who had grown pale and thin.

"Good heavens! what is the matter?" he asked her, after greeting the Baroness.

Adelaide made no reply, but she gave him a look of deep melancholy, a sad, dejected look, which pained and humiliated him.

"You have, no doubt, been working hard," said the old lady. "You are altered. We are the cause of your seclusion. That portrait had delayed some pictures essential to your reputation."

Hippolyte was glad to find so good an excuse for his rudeness.

"Yes," he said, "I have been very busy, but I have been suffering——"

At these words Adelaide raised her head, looked at her lover, and her anxious eyes had now no hint of reproach.

"You must have thought us quite indifferent to any good or ill that may befall you?" said the old lady.

"I was wrong," he replied. "Still, there are forms of pain which we know not how to confide to any one, even to a friendship of older date than that with which you honor me."

"The sincerity and strength of friendship are not to be measured by time. I have seen old friends who had not a tear to bestow on misfortune," said the Baroness, nodding sadly.

"But you—what ails you?" the young man asked Adelaide.

"Oh, nothing," replied the Baroness; "Adelaide has sat up late for some nights to finish some little piece of woman's work, and would not listen to me when I told her that a day more or less did not matter——"

Hippolyte was not listening. As he looked at these two noble, calm faces, he blushed for his suspicions and ascribed the loss of his purse to some unknown accident.

This was a delicious evening to him, and perhaps to her too. There are some secrets which young souls understand so well. Adelaide could read Hippolyte's thoughts. Though he could not confess his misdeeds, the painter knew them, and he had come back to his mistress more in love and more affectionate, trying thus to purchase her tacit forgiveness. Adelaide was enjoying such perfect, such sweet happiness, that she did not think she had paid too dear for it with all the grief that had so cruelly crushed her soul. And yet, this true concord of hearts, this understanding so full of magic charm, was disturbed by a little speech of Madame de Rouville's.

"Let us have our little game," she said, "for my old friend Kergarouët will not let me off."

These words revived all the young painter's fears; he colored as he looked at Adelaide's mother, but he saw nothing in her countenance but the expression of the frankest good-

nature; no double meaning marred its charm; its keenness was not perfidious, its humor seemed kindly, and no trace of remorse disturbed its equanimity.

He sat down to the card-table. Adelaide took side with the painter, saying that he did not know piquet, and needed a partner.

All through the game Madame de Rouville and her daughter exchanged looks of intelligence, which alarmed Hippolyte all the more because he was winning; but at last a final hand left the lovers in the old lady's debt.

To feel for some money in his pocket the painter took his hands off the table, and he then saw before him a purse which Adelaide had slipped in front of him without his noticing it; the poor child had the old one in her hand, and, to keep her countenance, was looking into it for the money to pay her mother. The blood rushed to Hippolyte's heart with such force that he was near fainting.

The new purse, substituted for his own, and which contained his fifteen gold louis, was worked with gilt beads. The rings and tassels bore witness to Adelaide's good taste, and she had no doubt spent all her little hoard in ornamenting this pretty piece of work. It was impossible to say with greater delicacy that the painter's gift could only be repaid by some proof of affection. Hippolyte, overcome with happiness, turned to look at Adelaide and her mother, and saw that they were tremulous with pleasure and delight at their little trick. He felt himself mean, sordid, a fool; he longed to punish himself, to rend his heart. A few tears rose to his eyes, by an irresistible impulse he sprang up, clasped Adelaide in his arms, pressed her to his heart, and stole a kiss; then with the simple heartiness of an artist: "I ask her for my wife!" he exclaimed, looking at the Baroness.

Adelaide looked at him with half-wrathful eyes, and Madame de Rouville, somewhat astonished, was considering her reply, when the scene was interrupted by a ring at the bell.

The old vice-admiral came in, followed by his shadow and Madame Schinner. Having guessed the cause of the grief her son vainly endeavored to conceal, Hippolyte's mother had made inquiries among her friends concerning Adelaide. Very justly alarmed by the calumnies which weighed on the young girl, unknown to the Comte de Kergarouët, whose name she learned from the porter's wife, she went to report them to the vice-admiral; and he, in his rage, declared "he would crop all the scoundrels' ears for them."

Then, prompted by his wrath, he went on to explain to Madame Schinner the secret of his losing intentionally at cards, because the Baronne's pride left him none but these ingenious means of assisting her.

When Madame Schinner had paid her respects to Madame de Rouville, the Baroness looked at the Comte de Kergarouët, at the Chevalier du Halga—the friend of the departed Comtesse de Kergarouët—at Hippolyte and Adelaide, and then said, with the grace that comes from the heart, "So we are a family party this evening."

PARIS, *May*, 1832.